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ABSTRACT

During the spring of 1987, the National Conference of State Legislatures awarded the Nebraska Legislature a cost-sharing award to study local school evaluation processes. Embodied in Legislative Resolution 181, which has the purpose of studying school evaluation procedures, the study attempts to provide legislators, educators, local school officials, parents, and others with information on the means by which local schools evaluate themselves and are evaluated by others, the use of evaluation results by interested parties, and the means by which the Nebraska legislature evaluates state schools through the current locally-fed state-consumed data collection and retrieval system. The study involved a review of the literature on school assessment and evaluation, an examination of assessment and evaluation processes in other states, an analysis of Nebraska's accreditation and approval processes, a survey of 350 accredited school districts, field interviews and visits in school districts undergoing accreditation, and critiques of the study's progress by educational experts. In addition, public hearings were conducted and the Nebraska Unicameral held the first annual Nebraska Legislative Issues Symposium in Omaha, where education was a major issue. Fourteen attachments include the Nebraska Legislature's Role and Mission Statement for Public Schools; the school district survey questionnaire and results; a chart showing educational indicators and the location of information in Nebraska; a report by the state department of education on performance based accreditation; an article by Dr. Robert D. Brown on program evaluation myths; three Legislative Issues Symposium briefing reports; and extracts from relevant legislation. (TJH)

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# Evaluation and Assessment Processes In Nebraska Public Schools

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## A Staff Report

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# Committee Membership and Staff

## LR 181 School Evaluation Processes In Nebraska Public Schools

**Committee Membership:**

Senator Ron Withem, Chair
719 Donegal
Papillion, NE 68046

Senator Dennis Baack
Box 610
Kimball, NE 69145

Senator Jerry Chizek
2807 South 137th Street
Omaha, NE 68144

Senator Merton Dierks
Box 38
Ewing, NE 68735

Senator Vard Johnson
2707 Fontenelle Blvd.
Omaha, NE 68104

Senator James McFarland
3440 "J" Street
Lincoln, NE 68510

Senator Arlene Nelson
3127 Woodridge Blvd.
Grand Island, NE 68801

Senator Richard Peterson
Route 2
Norfolk, NE 68701

Senator Roger Wehrbein
Route 2, Box 90
Plattsmouth, NE 68048

**Staff:**

Larry Scherer, Staff Coordinator, Legal Counsel, Education Committee

Dick Hargesheimer, Legislative Research Division

Sandy Myers, Program Analyst, Legislative Fiscal Office

Kim Davis, Legislative Aide to Senator Dennis Baack

Dawn Rockey, Legislative Aide to Senator Jerry Miller

Corey Phillips, Legislative Aide to Senator Roger Wehrbein

LaRue Wunderlich, Committee Clerk, Education Committee

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A number of individuals and organizations provided valuable assistance, comments and criticism in the conduct and preparation of this study. The LR 181 staff wishes to thank the local school officials who took the time and effort to respond to the staff's survey, and to those local educators who graciously cooperated with the staff's on-site visits during their accreditation reviews. Without their assistance, this study could not have been conducted. The staff also wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the State Department of Education, especially Hugh Harlan and his colleagues in the Approval and Accreditation Division.

The staff extends a special thanks to the study's two consultants, Professor Robert D. Brown of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Professor Katherine Kasten of the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Their insights into evaluation and assessment processes were invaluable; whatever value this study may have in improving educational quality in Nebraska owes much to their work. Whatever errors remain, in either fact or interpretation, are the staff's responsibility.

The staff also gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the National Conference of State Legislatures, which funded part of this study through an NCSL Cost-Sharing Award to the Nebraska Legislature. An earlier NCSL-sponsored -- U.S. Office of Education Research and Improvement funded study, by Michael Kirst, Evaluating State Education Reforms: A Special Legislative Report -- proved particularly useful in charting the LR 181 study.

Finally, as always, the skills of Inge Walker of the LRD in putting this product together are amply demonstrated throughout the report, and we thank her.

# Legislative Resolution 181

Introduced by Withem, 14th District.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this resolution is to study school evaluation procedures. Currently, local schools and the State Department of Education use a variety of measures and evaluation techniques to assess the effectiveness and performance of school programs. Nebraska rates highly on the national Wall Charts in terms of ACT scores, teacher/pupil ratios, and high school completion. There are, however, within the state, no consistently reliable evaluation models which policy makers at the state and local levels can use to assess school effectiveness or performance.

The Legislature has been awarded a cost-sharing grant by the National Conference of State Legislatures to study school evaluation. The study will provide for a thorough examination and assessment of current school evaluation practices, analysis of the current practice in relation to current school effectiveness research, and establishment of a state model for school evaluation.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE NINETIETH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, FIRST SESSION:**

1. That the Education Committee of the Legislature and other interested senators designated by the committee shall conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.
2. That the committee shall supervise and direct the proposed study activities contained in the National Conference of State Legislatures' grant proposal.
3. That the Education Committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.

# Summary

## I. Objectives

In the spring of 1987, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) awarded the Nebraska Legislature a cost-sharing award to conduct a study of local school evaluation processes. Embodied in Legislative Resolution 181, the study was designed to provide legislators, educators, local school officials, parents and others with information on:

- How local schools evaluate themselves;
- How local schools are evaluated by others (e.g., the state's accreditation and approval processes);
- How the results of these evaluations are used by legislators, educators, local school officials, parents and others; and
- How the Legislature evaluates Nebraska's schools through the current locally-fed, state-consumed data collection and retrieval system.

The LR 181 study assumed that legislators, educators, local school officials, parents, and others want information that can tell them when schools are performing well and why and when they are not and why. The study also assumed that policymakers want accountability as a path to improvement (e.g., diagnostic), and not as an end in and of itself.

## II. Methodology

During the 1987 legislative interim, the LR 181 staff reviewed the literature on school assessment and evaluation, examined assessment and evaluation processes in other states, studied Nebraska's accreditation and approval processes, surveyed 350 accredited school districts in Nebraska regarding their evaluation processes, conducted field interviews and site visits in school districts undergoing accreditation, and contracted with educational experts in Nebraska and nationally, who provided invaluable step-by-step critiques of the study's progress. Moreover, the Education Committee, under whose auspices the study was conducted, held several public hearings on various aspects of the staff's work, and developed legislative proposals for discussion and introduction.

In addition, in December 1987, the Unicameral held the first annual Nebraska Legislative Issues Symposium in Omaha. Forty-six of the 49 members of the Unicameral attended. Education was one of the two principal topics discussed at the Symposium, and significant attention was devoted to evaluation and assessment by the participants. The education participants included: Professor Michael Kirst of Stanford; Dr. Frank Newman, President of the Education Commission of the States; Senator Jerome Hughes, President of the Minnesota Senate; Representative Philip T. Warner, Chair of the Indiana House Education Committee; Representative Annette Morgan, Chair of the Missouri House Education Committee; Professor Katherine Kasten, the College of Education, University of Nebraska at Omaha; Professor Robert D. Brown, Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Professor C. Cale Hudson, Department of Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Professor Miles Bryant, Department of Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; and Dr. Vicki Luther and Mr. Milan Wall of the Heartland Center for Leadership Development in Lincoln.

## III. Highlights of the Staff's Findings and Analysis

### A. The National Education Reform Movement and Nebraska

- A generation ago, educators, parents, community and business leaders seemed most interested in seeing students develop BASIC SKILLS. That is still a dominant concern. As a recent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) study noted, a "disturbingly large proportion of American students.... are still unable to apply fundamental skills .. to situations encountered in everyday life." "At-Risk" students, those who enter the job market without adequate basic or thinking skills, are of particular concern. With demographic trends projecting just two workers to every retiree sometime in the next century, educators, policymakers, and the like are questioning whether society can afford to lose (e.g., fail to educate) even a single student. In addition, today, educators, parents, policymakers, and enlightened business leaders, driven by a desire to survive and to remain competitive in world markets, want more creativity and judgment -- more THINKING -- on the part of students.

- The latest national education reform movement, begun in 1983 with the publication of "A Nation At Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform," largely bypassed Nebraska. There are several reasons why. First, perennial "reorganization wars" (i.e., whether or not to consolidate) have sapped energy and captured the spotlight. Second is the absence of a grass roots constituency for educational reform due, in part, to a complacency among a populous that is content with the state's relatively high ranking on national Wall Charts. Third, when the Legislature enacted a major reform package in 1984 (LB 994), but failed to fund it, many educators experienced disappointment, followed by a resentment that carried over into an array of educational battles. Many of the provisions of LB 994 (e.g., extended hours, curriculum reform) were implemented by school districts nonetheless. Fourth, and perhaps most important, many Nebraska educators came to view the national response to "A Nation At Risk" as misguided at best. From their perspective, the national response -- carried out state-by-state -- has been one of overstandardization and overregulation. That is, many states have responded to "A Nation At Risk" by imposing more standards and more regulations on their schools from the top down, without adequate regard for diversity -- diversity among communities, among schools, among classrooms, and among the learning abilities of students.

- Far from being a handicap, the absence of a successful "Nebraska" response to "A Nation At Risk" presents the state with an opportunity, perhaps unparalleled in its history, to learn from the lessons of others, while charting a course to meet the educational imperatives of the next century.

- What are the lessons? And how do they fit into the evaluation and assessment processes in Nebraska public schools?

## B. Evaluation Nationally

- Among national education experts, there is an emerging consensus that school evaluation processes should be and can be aimed at quality not quantity, at improvement not punishment, and that they should be more locally than state based. Put differently, evaluation should be more of a diagnostic than a regulatory tool.

- At the same time, almost no one in the nationwide educational community appears satisfied with the current state of the art of evaluation and assessment systems. Many, if not most, educators believe there is far too much testing; and that most current testing fails to measure many important skills, particularly the more complex, higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.

- Many policymakers across the nation are equally frustrated with the inadequacies of current assessment systems. And they frequently ask how they can support more autonomy for schools while still ensuring that educators are meeting their responsibilities to educate students well.

- Among the key questions policymakers are trying to address in evaluation and assessment, as noted in a recent edition of the State Education Leader (Winter 1988), are three: What evaluation strategies will give policymakers a vivid and accurate view of the state of education in their states? How can higher-order skills best be measured? How can balance be achieved between the needs of local school educators for enhanced authority and the public's demand for easily understood, quantifiable achievement levels? In response, respected national education leaders are more and more contending that innovation and responsibility ought to be encouraged at the local level.

## C. Evaluation in Nebraska

- So, what is the state of evaluation in Nebraska public schools? First, a strong tradition of local control dominates the state's educational system. From the perspective of education experts and reformers, at both the national and state level, this can be a plus; to be successful, reforms in education require a strong basis of local support. Second, evaluation, as a path to improvement, must answer two questions: How are we doing? How can we do things better? Current evaluation processes (e.g., accreditation, self-evaluation, minimum skills testing) in Nebraska largely do neither very well. They more often measure quantity rather than quality. While one of their principal stated purposes is to foster local school improvement, they are largely regulatory, not diagnostic, tools. None of the present evaluation processes provides a basis for comparing one school to another and, whatever the innovative improvements that derive from them, they are not widely shared -- at least they do not percolate up to policymakers in the Legislature. For example, in response to the national education reform movement and the passage of LB994 in 1984, many schools, despite the absence of additional state funds, lengthened school hours. But because either no evaluations have been conducted or widely shared, no one really knows whether this "reform" made any difference.

- Beyond the Wall Charts, there is no clear portrait of the condition of education in Nebraska. Nebraska students have ranked well in national comparisons -- on national Wall Charts -- in such areas as college aptitude tests, graduation rates, and student/teacher ratios. However, while Wall Charts (i.e., state-by-state comparisons) might be useful in pointing out the truly mediocre, they provide no insight into why some schools do better than others. Wall Charts offer no direction for improvement; Wall Charts are not diagnostic tools; they don't measure learning or the learning environment. In an increasingly changing and competitive world, complacency over one's standing on Wall Charts is a prescription for stagnation, not progress.

- In Nebraska, with its strong tradition of local control, "school evaluation" has no generally accepted statewide meaning. To operate legally, school districts must, and all 927 Nebraska school districts do, meet certain APPROVAL standards.

- "APPROVAL" simply establishes minimum requirements (e.g., does the school have a lavatory, fountain, certified teachers, and the like) for legal operation; some schools far exceed the minimums, others do not; "approval" sets an acceptable basis for operation, but provides no basis for comparing one school to another. An "approved" school district that wishes to receive an "accredited" rating from the state Department of Education or from a regional accrediting agency (e.g., the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools) can, on a voluntary basis, follow the ACCREDITATION process.

- The ACCREDITATION process is characterized by the following features: it is voluntary on the part of the school district; the school district must conduct a "comprehensive school evaluation" once every seven years, which is a state-guided self-evaluation; and the process largely measures inputs (e.g., student/teacher ratios, number of books in the library, the number of teachers who teach classes in the subject matter for which they received college preparation). A school that then meets specific minimum standards receives an "accreditation" stamp. The accreditation process assumes that accredited schools are better than approved schools by virtue of having met more demanding minimum standards (e.g., for accreditation, a high school must offer about twice the number of courses as for approval). However, this is an arguable assumption. At present, there are 350 accredited schools in Nebraska; no school district that "applied" for accreditation in recent memory has been denied accreditation. Moreover, like the approval process, there is no basis within the accreditation process for comparing one school to another.

- However, one component of accreditation (i.e., the "comprehensive school evaluation") involves a formal peer-view process in which representatives (e.g., administrators, teachers, and parents) from different schools assess the strengths and weaknesses of the school district under accreditation review. This is, perhaps, the most valuable part of the accreditation process: peer-view teams have an opportunity to compare their school operations with another, and to share innovative and effective educational practices which they can take back to their own school districts.

- A third type of "evaluation" in Nebraska is the AA CLASSIFICATION rating, which evolved independently of any statutory requirement or standard. The AA Classification, which presently applies to 38 schools in Nebraska, is a recognition given to accredited schools by the State Board of Education; it is given to schools that meet certain peer-determined qualitative performance criteria. In addition, local schools do undertake other evaluations, on a largely ad hoc basis, at the direction of local school administrators and local school boards.

- Moreover, as part of an omnibus education reform bill (LB 994) adopted, but not funded, in 1984, the Legislature directed that "after July 1, 1989, all public schools in the state shall be required to meet quality and PERFORMANCE-BASED approval or accreditation standards as prescribed by the State Board of Education." However, the Legislature provided no explanation of what it meant by performance-based standards; and while a 1987 report on "Performance-Based Accreditation" by the state Department of Education identified some "new dimensions" for further study, it concluded that the present approval and accreditation processes are effective. (The state Department of Education's process in developing performance-based standards has not yet been completed.)

- As for assessment of student performance, current state law leaves discretion with the State Board of Education to require STATEWIDE STUDENT TESTING. The Board presently requires accredited schools to administer a competency test to receive accreditation -- either the "Nebraska Assessment Battery of Essential Learning Skills" (N-ABELS) or one of the school district's own design. Implemented in 1975, and last revised in 1977, N-ABELS is not highly regarded among educators as an effective measure of student performance or as a diagnostic tool for school improvement. A 1979 review of N-ABELS by the Teachers College at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (see Bibliography) raised a number of serious questions about the test's ability to measure anything. To the staff's knowledge, the 1979 critique has not provoked any changes or reevaluation of N-ABELS. (According to the State Department of Education, a majority of accredited schools use N-ABELS, but the Department did not know how many.)

- Finally, a sound data base provides a foundation for sound evaluation and assessment practices and the development of good public policy. A weak data base, on the other hand, hinders both. Testimony from national and state education leaders, as well as the results of the LR 181 School Evaluation Processes Survey, indicates that Nebraska's present data base is weak; that is, it does not provide an accurate and clear picture of the condition of education in the state. Only by becoming a more proactive participant in the data development process can Nebraska assure that the data needs and responsibility of the state's schools are considered adequately. Moreover, in response to legitimate criticism of the national Wall Chart, which attempts to compare state educational systems, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is developing a package of education statistics and indicators to better compare states' school systems. The CCSSO has affirmed the desirability of collecting student achievement data to examine achievement levels in the states' accounting for contextual factors (e.g., socio-economic variables), as well as differences in school policies and available resources. In addition, along with the National Center for Education Statistics and State Education Agencies, CCSSO is working to integrate and coordinate federal, state, and local level evaluation and assessment efforts.

## D. Survey of Evaluation In Accredited Nebraska Schools

- In a survey of the 350 accredited schools in Nebraska completed by superintendents and principals (with a response rate of nearly 60 percent), the majority of respondents indicated that the evaluation process required for state accreditation had a "noticeable impact" on school improvement. In response to a query about constraints in implementing recommendations deriving from the accreditation process, a plurality (31 percent) cited budgetary limitations as the controlling variable when a recommended change was not implemented. Some respondents volunteered that evaluations should be on-going, that simply going through the required evaluation process once every seven years was a prescription for trouble.

- Fifty-two percent of the respondents, however, indicated that their school had NOT conducted any evaluation over the past two years, other than the accreditation evaluation, which is required only once every seven years. When evaluations other than accreditation were conducted, the primary subject of evaluation was curriculum.

- A plurality (19 percent) indicated that the highest priority recommendation for change emanating from the accreditation evaluation was the need to improve communications inside and outside of the school. At the same time, respondents ranked the attitudes of the community, students, and parents as the most important indicator for evaluating their schools, as well as the principal indicator on which they would like more information.

- A majority of respondents judged the available data as sufficient to evaluate their schools. At the same time, most of the data sought and obtained from the State Department of Education (which ranked first as a source of data for schools) are of a procedural nature (e.g., about rules, curriculum, guidelines, and the like). Moreover, other, more substantive data deemed potentially useful for evaluation purposes (e.g., student achievement scores, data on schools with similar characteristics, follow-up information on attainment by graduates, prior evaluation studies, criteria for judging quality education, and the like) were not available.

- Next to the State Department of Education, respondents cited "other schools" as the most important source of information relevant to evaluations. On the other hand, respondents ranked similar data on similar schools in similar districts (e.g., student achievement scores) as an "indicator" that is not readily available, but which they would find very useful in conducting their evaluations.

## E. Emerging Forms of School Evaluation

- There are several types of evaluation. "PERFORMANCE-BASED" is one; it employs "performance indicators," which are statewide numerical measures of trends in educational variables; in contrast to accreditation, it attempts to measure "outputs" in some standardized fashion. However, as Michael Kirst notes, performance-based evaluations "rarely penetrate behind the classroom door to measure things such as the content actually taught, teacher morale, or the type of intellectual tasks students are performing." Another emerging type of evaluation, loosely called PROCESS-BASED, attempts to focus on what goes on in the instructional process; what goes on in the classroom; what goes on between the teacher and the student; what factors cause school A's students to do better than school B's. In short, processed-based evaluation assumes that the learning environment should receive equal or greater attention than the learning outcome.

- What could process-based evaluations tell us? If, for instance, as Dr. Brown points out, students did better on a math test this year than last, that would be a positive sign; "however, if in the instructional process they used rote memorization" to achieve the test results, "or suffered through intensive drill ..., then the outcomes might include hatred of math and poorer performance on other (neglected) subjects." Such process-based information would be extremely useful to teachers and local school administrators.

## F. What Next?

- Accreditation is not the same as evaluation. As Michael Kirst, Robert D. Brown, and many others have pointed out, evaluation is the process of making judgments about the worth of something. Evaluation should and can answer two questions: how are we doing; and what can we do better. Accreditation largely ignores such judgments and, as Robert D. Brown of the University of Nebraska states: "Standardized achievement tests are helpful tools but the results should not be the sole criteria for judging the worth of an educational program . . .. Making evaluations about educational programs is a natural, but complex process necessitating information about student learning, the instructional process, and appropriate use of resources."

- Outside of the accreditation process, evaluations of whatever kind don't appear to be widely conducted in Nebraska public schools. To the extent that evaluations -- of whatever kind -- are conducted at the local school level in Nebraska, they are done on an ad hoc basis, with little or no concerted, coordinated sharing of information (e.g., how to do it, what the results are). In Nebraska, policymakers, educators, parents, and community leaders don't know which schools are better than others or why some schools might be better than others. The present state-required accreditation process is not designed to assist local schools in making judgments about the quality of their schools and in offering guidance for improvement; much of the data that might be useful in conducting quality evaluations, whether performance or process-based, are unavailable. Community report cards, whether developed locally or on a statewide basis, are virtually nonexistent.

- What then are some meaningful measurements? According to Professor Kirst, an ideal system would encompass most of the following: the environment of the pupils; pupil capabilities and difficulties; resources that come to the school district; resources allocated to each school; educational goals; educational opportunities; pupil participation; and student outcomes.

- Part of the difficulty of evaluation in Nebraska lies in the data that are collected, and how they are transmitted to policymakers, educators, and so on. Few participants in the education community are completely comfortable with the design of the present data system for purposes of evaluation and assessment of local schools. Moreover, in contrast to the present accreditation process, evaluation processes, of whatever kind, require a solid data base.

- At the same time that the state works to strengthen its data base, great care should be given to the potential misuses and abuses of such data. As some pundit once said, do not put your faith in what statistics say until you have carefully considered what they do not say. Thus, whatever data is developed -- whether for publication in local newspapers or as a portrayal of the condition of education in Nebraska -- could contain a brief, one-page "warning" about what the data do not say. This would be like the warning that has adorned cigarette packs for many years.

- In framing, in part, a portrait of education in Nebraska, the state also could consider developing and implementing some sort of statewide competency testing. While the dangers of "testing" are now well-documented, Nebraska does not appear to be an "over-tested" state. Moreover, the development of such a test, or tests, could be constructed and marketed to avoid the dangers that have plagued others. For instance, such tests would be recognized as only one measurement of school and student achievement; would be designed with the diversity of local conditions in mind; and would not be a basis for withholding approval or accreditation. Instead, such tests would be one of a panoply of measurements aimed at helping schools improve themselves. (At present, many Nebraskans fall prey to the dangers of taking a single test -- the ACT as depicted on the national Wall Chart -- as a measurement of student achievement, although the risk, as a recent CBO study noted, "of being misinformed by the results of a single test is appreciable, and it is often impossible to foresee when a single test will be misleading." In a sense, then, Nebraska has the worst of both worlds: on the one hand, there is no statewide picture of student achievement; while, on the other hand, there is statewide complacency because of the relatively high-ranking of Nebraska students on the national Wall Chart, a now largely discredited instrument for measurement.)

- Another piece of the puzzle revolves around the ever-present controversy between the "top-down" versus the "bottom-up" approach to education. In other words, who controls and for what purposes? What is the proper balance between the state's constitutional responsibility to oversee education and the need for flexibility at the local level to encourage experimentation and innovation? Perhaps more so than in any other state, the top-down versus bottom-up controversy continues to bedevil Nebraska policymakers.

- Among national education experts, there is an emerging consensus that the early education reform movement erred on the side of the "top-down" approach, that more attention ought to be devoted to state-assisted (as opposed to strict regulation), locally-developed evaluation and assessment processes. In a very generalized sense, for instance, the state's role could be limited to establishing a VISION OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE; the vision could set a standard for an educated citizen; it could be rigorously but generally stated; it could be offered as a catalyst for school improvement. The state could also implement statewide testing, based on minimal competencies to measure how well the schools are progressing toward the vision of educational excellence; there could be a single test or several options; such tests, however, would be recognized and accepted as crude indicators of school and student achievement, as one tool aimed at diagnosis and improvement and should be developed with the needs and diversity of local schools in mind.

- In summary, Nebraska, largely having missed the first wave of school reform in the 1980s, now has an opportunity to learn from the lessons of others. In school evaluation processes, research has progressed rapidly on what works and what doesn't work (e.g., how to measure quality, where to measure it). To capitalize on this opportunity, however, Nebraska needs to devote more attention to evaluation and assessment -- in the classroom as well as in the school district -- and needs to construct (or repackage) a data base that will assist local schools in going beyond the accreditation process, while providing policymakers a clearer picture of the condition of education in the state. To date, concentrated and shared efforts to evaluate the quality of education as a path to the future have lagged far behind the issues of school organization and finance in Nebraska. Absent a greater effort to deal with the quality of education -- with the learning environment, with the interaction between students and teachers -- Nebraska will remain unprepared to judge, and to change, its educational system to meet the 21st century.

## IV. Legislative Initiative

- As one result of the LR 181 study, Legislative Bill (LB) 1116 was introduced during the 1988 legislative session.

- LB 1116 recognizes that student assessment is only one tool, albeit an important one, for better evaluating Nebraska schools. It establishes a special Educational Data Planning Committee to develop a plan to improve the educational data system in the state. The bill also calls for the State Department of Education, with the assistance of the Planning Committee, to develop or designate a student assessment system to measure the status and progress of Nebraska schools in the teaching and learning of educational competencies. These include not only the basics of communication and computation, but also critical thinking and analysis. Local diversity is recognized in allowing school districts to use locally developed assessments. The bill further recognizes that the Legislature has described its vision or goals for educational excellence through its role and mission statement in LB 994 (see Attachment 1), adopted in 1984, and that an adequate assessment system is necessary for state policymakers to measure the progress being made toward the stated goals. In addition, the bill provides for the reporting of performance indicators to the local community and to the state. Finally, the bill requires local districts to use a locally-selected achievement test to evaluate and improve school curricula.

- The LR 181 study also helped spark discussion in the academic community in Nebraska on the potential for developing a Center for Policy Analysis in Education, modeled after PACE in California. In December, Professor Kirst of Stanford led a discussion among members of the Education Committee and the academic community on PACE. At this point, discussions are still on-going among the principal academic communities.

# Introduction

## I. Design

In the spring of 1987, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) awarded the Nebraska Legislature a cost-sharing award to conduct a study of local school evaluation processes. Embodied in Legislative Resolution 181, the study was designed to provide legislators, educators, local school officials, parents and others with information on:

- How local schools evaluate themselves;
- How local schools are evaluated by others (e.g., the state's accreditation and approval processes);
- How the results of these evaluations are used by legislators, educators, local school officials, parents and others; and
- How the Legislature evaluates Nebraska's schools through the current locally-fed, state-consumed data collection and retrieval system.

The LR 181 study assumed that legislators, educators, local school officials, parents, and others want information that can tell them when schools are performing well and why and when they are not and why. The study also assumed that policymakers want accountability as a path to improvement (e.g., diagnostic), and not as an end in and of itself.

## II. Methodology

During the 1987 legislative interim, the LR 181 staff reviewed the literature on school assessment and evaluation, examined assessment and evaluation processes in other states, studied Nebraska's accreditation and approval processes, surveyed 350 accredited school districts in Nebraska regarding their evaluation processes, conducted field interviews and site visits in school districts undergoing accreditation, and contracted with educational experts in Nebraska and nationally, who provided invaluable step-by-step critiques of the study's progress. Moreover, the Education Committee, under whose auspices the study was conducted, held several public hearings on various aspects of the staff's work, and developed legislative proposals for discussion and introduction.

In addition, in December 1987, the Unicameral held the first annual Nebraska Legislative Issues Symposium in Omaha. Education was one of the two principal topics discussed at the Symposium, and significant attention was devoted to evaluation and assessment by the participants. The Symposium brought Nebraska legislators together with national and state education experts.

## III. Issues

Throughout the course of the LR 181 study, the staff, with the assistance of the consultants, developed and refined a set of questions and topics for exploration. The topics ranged from the state of the art of assessment and evaluation to the lessons gleaned from other states to developing a descriptive profile of assessment and evaluation efforts in Nebraska. They included:

### A. The State of the Art of Evaluation

- What should be the goals of educational excellence and how should they fit with assessment and evaluation?
- What do we mean by assessment and evaluation in education?
- What is the current state of the art of assessment and evaluation?
- What evaluation strategies give policymakers, educators, and parents a clear view of the state of education in their states and in their communities?
- What can and should school assessment and evaluation provide, and for whom?

- How do we know what works and what doesn't work in education?
- How can balance be achieved between the needs of local school educators for enhanced authority and the public's demand for easily understood achievement measures?

## B. Lessons From the States

- What have we learned from the recent national education reform movement about assessment and evaluation in the states?
- What have other states done through their school reform measures -- through evaluation and assessment -- to encourage innovation and experimentation at the local level while attending to reasonable state interests?
- How have, and how could, state legislatures encourage meaningful school assessment and evaluation?
- What data resources are utilized or being developed in other states for the purposes of assessment and evaluation?
- What do national Wall Charts -- that is, state-by-state comparisons -- tell us?

## C. Developing a Profile of Assessment and Evaluation in Nebraska

- Why focus on school evaluation and assessment in Nebraska?
- What is the legitimate interest of the state in local school assessment and evaluation efforts?
- What do school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and policymakers consider to be "evaluations"?
- What kinds of assessment and evaluation are done at the local school level in Nebraska?
- Who does what with the local school evaluations?
- How many evaluations are routine or for accreditation purposes, and how many are designed to address specific questions?
- Who is involved in planning the evaluations and in conducting them?
- Who obtains and uses the results of the evaluations?
- What are the backgrounds of the people conducting the evaluations?
- Do local schools report their evaluation efforts and results to their communities? How?
- Are decisions made as a result of evaluations? For example, are educational program changes made?
- Are local school evaluations useful for making or changing state education policy?

- How do we know what happens in the classroom? What happens between the teacher and the student? Do we have summary measures of such things as time-on-task, instructional strategies and activities (e.g., lectures, discussions, field trips, drill, recitation, one-on-one, problem-solving, and the like)?
- What are the processes or environmental factors that distinguish a school whose students score high on outcome tests from schools whose students don't?
- Are useful data now available and presented in an understandable fashion to policymakers, educators, parents, and the like?
- What do legislators think they need to know about schools and school performance?
- What data are being collected from local schools by the state?
- What other data might be collected? Is there data that is not available that local school educators would find useful in their assessment and evaluation activities?
- Do the data provide for a fair comparison of schools and/or school districts across the state? Can it?
- What are the potential misuses of educational data?
- What would be the cost of developing the kinds of data bases identified as necessary but presently unavailable?
- Is statewide competency testing, or some variation of it, feasible and worthwhile?

## IV. Discussion

### A. The Setting

Nebraska is predominately an agriculture state, whose landscape is dotted with small towns. Only eleven cities, including Lincoln and Omaha, have a population of more than 10,000; and only 30 of the state's 93 counties have more than 10,000 inhabitants. Nationally, Nebraska ranks 15th in total square miles and 36th in total population.

The elementary and secondary (K-12) public school system is characterized by a long and strong tradition of local control. In 1930, with a population of 1.4 million, Nebraska had some 7,244 school districts, or, on average, about 1 for every 45 students (or, on average, 1 for every 18 farms). In 1980, with a population of 1.5 million, there were 1,062 school districts, or, on average, about 1 for every 217 students (about 1 for every 59 farms). During the 1986-87 school year, Nebraska had 927 public school districts, 662, or 67 percent, of which were Class 1's (K-6) with an average student body of 26. Today, 31 of the school districts have elected school board members but no students. The largest portion of Nebraska's K-12 student body (267,139) are in Class III districts (170,625, or 64 percent); Class III's maintain both an elementary and secondary school under the direction of a single board, and are located in areas having a population of more than 1,000 but less than 100,000. Although 38 percent of the state's school districts are accredited through the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, about 80 percent of the students attend NCA-accredited schools.

(In Nebraska, school districts are classified I through VI. Class I's maintain only elementary grades under a single school board; Class II's maintain both elementary and high school grades under a single board in areas of 1,000 inhabitants or less; Class III's maintain elementary and secondary grades in areas having between 1,000 and 100,000 inhabitants; Class IV's also maintain K-12 grades, but in areas having a population between 100,000 - 200,000; Class V's maintain K-12 grades in areas of 200,000 or more people; and Class VI's are districts that maintain only a high school.)

The funding of public elementary and secondary education in Nebraska follows from the tradition of local control. In 1985-86, almost 63 percent of school funding came from local revenue, more than in all but two states (New Hampshire and Oregon). Whereas on the average nationally, states pick up some 46 percent of the school tab, in Nebraska the state's share was 25.9 percent in 1985-86.

Overall, education remains the single largest area of non-utility expenditure for state and local government in Nebraska. Of total direct public expenditures of some $5.1 billion in 1985, 20 percent supported K-12 public education. At the same time, Nebraska ranked 23rd in the nation in per capita income; 12th in the percentage of personal income remaining after state and local taxes; 41st in teachers' salaries; and 31st in per pupil expenditures.

As Nebraska moves toward the 21st century, the educational system will confront a number of trends. First, student enrollment, having declined steadily since 1968, will increase slightly over the next decade. Second, the fastest growing segment of the Nebraska population is 65 and older, while the population aged 85 years and older will increase some 200 percent by the year 2000. Third, net out-migration, especially among the age group 25-39, has increased markedly in the past seven years. Fourth, by 1992, only three workers will provide social security benefits for each retiree, down from a ratio of 17-1 in 1950. Fifth, more children, perhaps a majority, who are born in the 1980s will be living with only one parent by the time they reach 18. Sixth, a number of studies indicate that in the future most people will change jobs and careers several times during their active years. How the Nebraska educational system responds to these and other trends is largely up to Nebraskans themselves. On-going examination of education to determine if programs are relevant for the changing workforce may have to become a familiar part of the educational landscape.

## B. Deliberations on the Evaluation of Nebraska Schools

Preliminary deliberations among the staff, the consultants, and some committee members on the LR 181 study centered on two questions:

- Why should we focus our attention on local school evaluation processes?
- What is the legitimate interest of the state in local school evaluation?

Some participants noted that, afterall, the accomplishments of Nebraska's schools, as revealed on the national Wall Chart, have been impressive. Nebraska students have ranked well on college aptitude tests, graduation rates, and student/teacher ratios. Others suggested that "the times have changed," and that change is now a constant feature of our lives; standing still means being left behind; complacency about the status quo -- in face of changing economic conditions, an aging population (e.g., Nebraska ranks 8th nationally in the number of people 65 years of age and older), an altered family structure -- is a prescription for stagnation, not progress. Moreover, they contend that the national Wall Chart reveals very little, if anything, about the quality of schools and the learning environment. Still others suggested that the high ranking of Nebraska students on the Wall Chart may be more attributable to certain characteristics of Nebraska communities -- their homogeneity, their strong work ethic -- than to anything the schools do. Afterall, these participants said, Nebraska ranks comparatively low in certain resource "inputs," while students in small school districts face restricted curricula, less specialized teachers, and other limited avenues for educational and social expansion.

Whatever the condition of education in Nebraska, most of the discussants agreed that we do not have a clear picture of it. Although most, if not all, Nebraska communities strongly support the importance of education for their children, no annual assessment of the health of Nebraska's schools is produced or available to policymakers, educators, parents, and students. Generally, Nebraskans know a good deal about -- or at least a good deal of information is available about -- school finance and school district organization. But very little is known -- or, at least, very little information is shared -- on the quality of education in the schools (e.g., the learning environment, teacher morale), and on what kinds of things need to be done to meet the educational imperatives of the next century. In short, evaluating the quality of education in Nebraska has taken a back seat to issues of finance and organization.

Still, some discussants wondered, what is the legitimate interest of the state in local school evaluation processes? Should state policymakers be concerned about whether or not local evaluation processes are useful in making local decisions about education? Or, should the state, itself, evaluate whether the education received by children in the schools is adequate and meets the goals for public schools established by the Legislature? In part, this discussion revolved around the perennial issue of "top-down" versus "bottom-up". Some participants said that the state clearly has a constitutional responsibility in whether the resources for education are used effectively and equitably. For instance, they suggested that simply because two school districts may both meet or exceed the standards for approval does not justify that they both must exist. At another point on the top-down, bottom-up spectrum, some participants argued that it would, indeed, be highly useful to know what kinds of evaluations are done at the local school level and who does what with them. Evaluation practitioners, both nationally and in Nebraska, do not regard Nebraska's approval and accreditation processes as "evaluations," and they contend that information about local school evaluations might provide clues on how the Legislature could assist and encourage evaluation efforts aimed more at improvement than at regulation.

The LR 181 staff, subsequently, developed a survey instrument on local school evaluation processes. The survey audience was limited to the 350 "accredited" school districts based on the rationale that the "approval" standards that all schools must meet are more legal than evaluative in nature, and that the accredited schools were more likely to have the resources to conduct evaluations outside of, and in addition to, the accreditation process.

The results of the survey, and the staff's analysis of it, were then presented to the Education Committee at public hearings in Lincoln and Omaha. Following the hearings, the presentation of the staff's findings, and the education sessions at the 1987 Legislative Issues

Symposium, LB 1116 was drafted and introduced. Perhaps the overriding aims of LB 1116 are: to move the state in the direction of building a data system that will provide a picture of the health of education in Nebraska, a picture that will help policymakers evaluate and refine the goals they have set for schools; and to encourage local schools to experiment and innovate through the process of evaluation and assessment. LB 1116 attempts to build on the best traditions and possibilities of local control, while avoiding the dangers of overstandardization and overregulation.

# School Evaluation Processes in Nebraska

## I. Introduction

- What is school evaluation?
- Who does and who should evaluate the effectiveness of our school system?
- How valid are comparisons of state school systems on the national "Wall Chart" produced by the U.S. Department of Education?
- Should the State of Nebraska compare the resources, performance and programs of individual school districts?
- What educational "indicators" are appropriate for Nebraska schools?

These are some of the questions that concern state and local educators and policymakers in an era of increased public scrutiny of education. The purpose of this section is not to answer these difficult questions; rather it is to draw a portrait of school evaluation processes in Nebraska to provide policymakers with a framework to begin addressing these and other questions.

First, we will define some of the terminology used throughout this study. Second, we will examine different types of school evaluations currently in use in Nebraska. Finally, we will take a brief look at Nebraska's rankings on various national indicators and begin to suggest reasons why complacency should not be the order of the day for state and local policymakers.

## II. Definitions

### A. Evaluation

"Evaluation" is a term that may be as broad as the Platte River or as narrow as a mountain stream. One prominent definition, taken from B. Worthen and J. Sanders, Educational Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines (N.Y.: Longman, 1987), is: "Evaluation is the determination of a thing's value. In education, it is the formal determination of the quality, effectiveness, or value of a program, product, project, process, objective, or curriculum." Evaluation uses inquiry and judgment methods to assist persons in making judgments about worth and to assist in decision-making. Evaluators make distinctions between formative evaluation (e.g., used to help improve an educational effort) and summative evaluation (e.g., used to make significant decisions about an educational effort).

School evaluation is surely in the eye of the beholder. Nebraska evaluates its school system through the Nebraska Department of Education, the State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education, and the Legislature. The communities evaluate their schools through local boards of education, local school administrators, teachers, students, parents and taxpayers. In numerous informal and formal ways these groups all seek to answer the basic questions: What is the strength of our school system? What are its weaknesses? How do we equate with comparable states or school districts? How do we measure up against the "ideal effective school"?

Although "evaluation" in its various guises might appear to be more of a semantic than a substantive issue, it is nevertheless an important, even critical issue to come to grips with. It is important, for instance, that policymakers, educators, and community leaders acknowledge and make explicit the reasons for wanting to know how effective a school is. And those reasons include making judgments and decisions about the worth of something.

Moreover, an effective evaluation effort can provide useful information for the classroom instructor, the building principal, as well as the Legislature. Information garnered from evaluations should help them determine ways to improve their educational efforts, as well as to answer the question, "How are we doing?" An evaluation designed only to help the state Department of Education or the Legislature is not likely to result in much real change -- for the basic, simple reason that teaching and learning takes place in the classroom, at the local school level. Put differently, as Professor Michael Kirst of Stanford notes, "decisions made closest to the child are the most influential," which suggests "the importance" of "focusing evaluation resources ..... in the classroom, rather than by relying totally on top-down assessment or the precision of state regulations."

## B. Educational Indicators

Jeanne Oakes, in Educational Indicators (1986) states: "An indicator is any measurement or statistic which tells something about the performance or health of a school system. Indicators provide essential information about a system's current functioning to suggest whether progress is being made and warn of potential problems. Indicators have acceptable and accepted reference points to past measurement or comparable systems." Some examples of educational indicators include: achievement test scores, local opinion polls, post-graduate activities, special obstacles such as a high percent of poverty students or handicapped students and resource indicators such as costs per pupil.

Indicators are useful as "thumbnail sketches" for utilization by local and state policymakers in setting educational policy. An indicator or specific measurement by itself may present an unfair, inaccurate and one dimensional view of a school or school system. An indicator taken together with other relevant measurements and indicators, especially noting changes over a period of time, essentially becomes a form of evaluation. This key difference between measurement, through indicators, and evaluation is illustrated aptly by Mr. George H. Hanford, President of the College Board, in reference to the use of SAT scores in comparing state educational quality or progress. In Education Week (October 8, 1986), he stated:

> *The key in the board's view, is in the distinction between measurement and evaluation, between what the S.A.T. measures and what may be indicated by changes in scores over time. Using score changes in comparison within the state or within individual jurisdictions over time, in conjunction with changes in other indicators, is a legitimate form of evaluation. What if, along with rising S.A.T. scores, dropout rates are declining, enrollments in honors courses are increasing, reading scores are improving, and college admissions are going up? That is a picture that reflects a positive evaluation. If the trends are reversed, the picture would be negative. If the trends are mixed, so is the picture.*

## C. Accreditation

School accreditation must be clearly distinguished from school evaluation. Accreditation is a system whereby schools meet specific minimum regulatory standards in order to receive an official stamp of approval from the state or a regional accrediting agency. Examples of state accreditation standards include minimum course offerings, minimum number of library books, properly certificated staff, minimum number of hours of instruction, and so on. In addition, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) accreditation is applicable to Nebraska school systems. Accreditation in Nebraska is voluntary.

Accreditation is only one indicator or measurement of school district's quality. Aside from the fact that school districts in Nebraska must perform a "Comprehensive School

Evaluation" every seven years in order to meet minimum accreditation standards, there is no inherent connection between the concepts of school evaluation, which inherently is a judgmental and flexible process, and the concept of accreditation, which is based on meeting verifiable objective minimum standards in a formal, rather inflexible manner.

## D. Testing/Assessment

"Testing" and "assessment" in the educational community usually refer to student tests or other measurements of student progress. One example would be the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a nationwide survey of student performance in key areas of mathematics, reading and writing. Results are compared over a period of time. Another example would be the standardized achievement tests which compare student achievement in key areas to a national norm or average.

In Nebraska, state law authorizes the State Board of Education to establish a statewide achievement test. It has not used its authority to do so.

A third type of testing would be criterion-referenced competency tests used to measure the acquisition of basic skills. Accreditation rules require all accredited schools to use a competency measurement to assess the acquisitions of basic skills.

In Nebraska all accredited schools must use a test of this nature. Results are used only by the school. N-ABELS or Nebraska-Assessment Battery of Essential Learning Skills is most often used, according to the state Department of Education. (However, the Department did not know how many of the 350 accredited Nebraska schools actually use N-ABELS.)

These tests or assessments may be relevant indicators, which taken together with other indicators and pertinent contextual information (such as socio-economic data), over a period of time, may form an objective basis from which to evaluate or judge a school district or state school system.

## III. Current Methods of Evaluating Nebraska Schools

This section highlights the current ways in which Nebraska schools are evaluated at the local, state and national level. It also lists those educational indicators that are currently used in Nebraska.

### A. Local Evaluations and Indicators

#### 1. *The Comprehensive School Evaluation*

This is what Nebraska school officials most often think of when the term school "evaluation" is mentioned. The Comprehensive School Evaluation Process is required for accreditation under Rule 15 of the State Department of Education. The evaluation is conducted every seven years to coincide with a similar type of school evaluation done for accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA). This evaluation is to examine the need for improvement in all major areas of the school system including curriculum, facilities, media, staffing, and management. This evaluation process is in three parts: Phase I -- Self-study; Phase II -- External committee visit; and Phase III -- Implementation.

There are no objective standards, criteria or indicators that the Department requires schools to use in this process. However, schools are encouraged to come up with their own goals and specific objectives to meet school district goals that are capable of objective verification. The aim is to reduce the discrepancy between the stated philosophy and actual conditions in the school, through measurement of progress in reaching specific objectives.

### 2. *North Central - Comprehensive School Evaluation*

This process is quite similar to the evaluation required for state accreditation. The main difference is that NCA supplies evaluative criteria covering all major curricular areas and the focus, therefore, tends to be based more on curriculum study and improvement.

### 3. *Locally Initiated Evaluations*

Local boards of education, administrators and/or teachers may embark upon specific evaluations. For example, Lincoln Public Schools in recent years has conducted in-depth evaluations of the gifted program and mathematics. These processes range from the formal to very informal. Ongoing evaluation personnel are employed by most of the larger districts (e.g., about 38 of the state's 927 school districts).

### 4. *Local Student Testing/Assessment*

One of the traditional methods by which local schools evaluate their programs and their performance is through student testing. Most districts utilize nationally-normed standardized achievement tests of their choice, such as the Iowa

Test of Basic Skills or the California Achievement Test. Again, Nebraska is one of the few states that does not require statewide achievement test or assessment. Achievement test data are not reported to the state Department of Education. Locally, a few districts do report their achievement test scores to parents and the press, although this is not required in Nebraska.

All secondary schools in Nebraska provide opportunity to high school juniors and seniors to take the ACT for college entry. The SAT is available for students in some schools. As indicated above, all accredited schools must use a criterion-referenced test measuring mastery of basic learning skills. The test most commonly used, N-ABELS, is offered most often in the sixth grade. Results primarily are used for diagnosing learning problems and curriculum weaknesses. With one exception, school districts do not report the results of N-ABELS to parents or the local press; the N-ABELS test has not provided either the accountability or the means for school improvement for which it was originally intended. (A critical 1979 evaluation of the N-ABELS test by the Teacher College at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln evidently provoked no response or reassessment of the test on the part of the state Department of Education.)

### 5. *Other Local Indicators*

Most schools have reference to the following kinds of statistics in conducting evaluations of their programs:

- Costs per pupils
- Pupil/Teacher ratios
- Valuation per pupil
- Graduation rates/drop out rates

- Participation in post-secondary education
- School personnel and community attitudes
- Teacher qualifications
- Course offerings data

The extent to which these and other kinds of data are used by local districts to compare themselves to other districts of similar size and socio-economic composition is unknown. (A survey, discussed later, of all accredited schools in Nebraska, indicates that very little formal comparison exists.)

## B. State Evaluation and Indicators

### 1. *Accreditation and Approval Requirements*

In one sense, from the **state perspective** Nebraska makes an evaluation of its schools by application of approval and accreditation standards. There is a judgment made (whether correct or not is certainly open to question) that a school which meets state accreditation standards offers a better education than one which is only approved. This same judgment is also made in relation to AA accredited schools or North Central accredited schools. However, it must be kept in mind that state accreditation assures only minimum level of educational opportunity. It does not measure quality or excellence.

### 2. ***State Required Reports***

There are a number of data reports that are required by state law or Department rules. In the past these data have not been reduced into indicators on a regular basis for purposes of presenting a picture of the health of the Nebraska School system. Compilations of data and statistics tend to come in reaction to criticisms of the schools from outside and within the school system. Some of the required reports are as follows:

- School Census report and full school district membership report (enrollment, residence, average daily membership)
- Fall Personnel Report (staff assignments and qualifications)
- Curriculum Report (courses offered)
- Accreditation Report (data relating accreditation requirements)
- Annual Statistical Summary Report (year end data on costs, enrollment, etc.)
- Annual Finance Report (financial data on expenditures and revenues)
- Special Education Report (program and budgeting data)

Statistics that state legislators frequently receive from these reports are:

- Per pupil cost
- Per pupil valuation
- Teacher/pupil ratios

Statistics that are less frequently seen in the Legislature include:

- Course offerings by size of school
- Percent of courses taught by properly endorsed teachers
- ACT scores by size of school

In the last several years, more and more statistics have become available to the Legislature. However, aside from financial data, there has been no well-packaged group of statistics presenting a comprehensive view of the Nebraska school system.

### 3. *Performance-based accreditation*

In 1984, as part of its omnibus school reform package, the Legislature amended the school approval and accreditation law to require all public schools to meet quality and performance-based approval and accreditation standards. A task force of the Department has presented its recommendations (See Attachments) for implementation. Pilot studies were carried on in four Nebraska schools. The Department is currently surveying all schools on six sample performance standards:

- Student achievement
- ACT scores
- Dropout rates
- Post-graduate activities of students
- Minimum basic learning skills and competency
- School climate survey

Implementation is supposed to occur by school year 1989.

## C. Federal Evaluations and Indicators

### 1. *The Wall Chart*

For the last few years the U.S. Department of Education has produced what is known "affectionately" to educators as the Wall Chart. The 50 states are compared on the basis of ***student performance indicators*** (ACT or SAT scores and graduation rates), ***certain resource inputs*** (average teacher salary, pupil/teacher ratios, expenditures per pupil and expenditures as a percent of per capita income), ***population characteristics*** (poverty, minority enrollment, percent handicapped enrollment and per capita income) and participation in various reform measures (minimum competency tests, performance-based teacher pay, teacher testing prior to certification, etc.).

***On the surface***, Nebraska compares favorably. For example, Nebraska is fourth in national ACT scores, second in graduation rates, and 8th in pupil/teacher ratios. Nebraska is in the middle in terms of expenditures as a percent of income per capita (19th), and near bottom in poverty (37th) and minorities (41st).

The national Wall Charts have been soundly and roundly criticized as a notoriously misleading indicator of the condition of a state's educational system. The Wall Chart, for instance, offers no context or controls for comparing one state to another; states where only a few students took the SAT were compared with states where a large number of students took the test; focus is placed on high school graduation rates and college-bound students; data on "at-risk" students and other important variables are largely missing. In short, the Wall Chart offers no insight into why one school might do better than another and no direction for school improvement. The Wall Chart offers no information about the classroom, the place where decisions about education are the most influential.

2. ***Educational Assessment Project*** (National Council of Chief State School Officers)

In reaction to the "Wall Chart", the Chief State School Officers decided to come up with a group of higher quality educational indicators based on a common set of data and definitions with which valid and reliable comparison can be made between states. These will be broken down into:

- ***Contextual Factors***--demographics, level of resources, indication of student need.
- ***Policies and Practices***--attendance, school completion, achievement, status after graduation.

The NCCSSO project is in progress and will not result in improved state comparison data for at least a few more years.

3. ***Elementary/Secondary Redesign*** (U.S. Department of Education-Center for Education Statistics)

Also in response to some criticism of the Wall Chart, DOE began a project to redesign its data gathering system for elementary and secondary education. This process has dovetailed with the work of NCCSSO. The major goal seems to be to arrive at some common definitions and data elements that might more fairly and accurately compare states in their school systems.

The Nebraska Department of Education is currently in the process of examining necessary alterations of its data systems to fit the new federal needs for information.

## IV. Conclusion

From the preceding description of current evaluation processes and use of educational indicators in Nebraska, it is apparent that there are few common understandings about what makes a good school in Nebraska. Probably one of the most commonly used criterion would be whether or not the school is state accredited, North Central accredited or AA accredited. However, there now is less understanding and agreement on what accreditation should mean than in the past. The "performance-based" accreditation standards being examined in Nebraska point to a new direction and trend in measuring school effectiveness. In addition, the Wall Chart does not present a complete or in-depth picture of our state school system. For example, college entrance exam scores are probably the most widely used measures of success of state school systems. This statistic simply is too one-dimensional to tell the story about a state school system. A school system's performance cannot be fairly evaluated based solely on the performance of college-bound students.

The shortcomings of evaluation in Nebraska and the shortcomings of the way in which state data is used nationally suggests that local schools could benefit from a closer examination of the state's educational data system -- in light of their own needs, as well as the needs of state and federal policymakers. In a local control state such as Nebraska, priority should be given to the data needs of local boards, administrators, and teachers. And the rather foggy picture of the condition of evaluation in Nebraska points to the need for the creation of a planning group – comprised of evaluation practitioners, state and local school officials, teachers, parents, and community leaders – to map out a state educational data system that would include relevant input, process, and output indicators, while remaining sensitive to the diversity of local communities.

# School Evaluation Processes In Selected States

Nebraska is not alone in its quest for ways to measure the performance and quality of its public school system. The trend across the nation clearly is to develop improved measures of school accountability. The rationale for such accountability stems in part from the need to evaluate the success or failure of reform measures implemented in recent years. While the Nebraska reform movement has remained unfunded and unimplemented in terms of state excellence programs, there have been substantial changes in instructional time, graduation requirements and minimum course offerings. The cost, as well as effectiveness of these changes, which have fallen to local schools for financial support, have not been evaluated. Second, the national polls consistently show that public support exists for greater spending in education if accountability measures are in place to assure that improvements in the educational program are taking place.

The purpose of this section is to review the action in selected states in establishing indicators of progress in meeting educational excellence goals. The purpose is not to be comprehensive, but rather to look at a few states which have begun strong evaluation efforts and a few which have similar political and educational philosophies.

### Arizona - Establishing Goals for Excellence

In 1987, the Arizona Legislature enacted S.B. 1423 requiring a special legislative committee to establish Arizona's Educational Excellence Goals. Focus was placed on establishing specific, attainable goals for achievement levels of students in grades 3, 8 and

12, high school graduation rates and post-school employment and college enrollment rates. The special committee has issued some recommended goals, which were formed by a group of task forces made up of educators, experts, legislators, and business people. The Arizona process does include establishment of indicators to measure whether or not goals are being met.

### California Assessment and Evaluation Projects

California has probably one of the most extensive assessment programs in the nation. The CAP (California Assessment Program) includes tests measuring progress in achieving skill objectives in reading and math in grades 3, 8 and 12 as well as provisions to measure school climate and course-taking patterns, school attendance rates, college performance, etc. Comparisons are made only within similarly situated socio-economic groupings. In addition, test scores are broken down by tracks (academic, general, vocational and remedial). Compared to the ***Wall Chart*** focus on college-entry exam scores (SAT/ACT), CAP is light-years ahead in sophistication.

Secondly, California may be unique in developing a policy assessment center known as PACE, or Policy Analysis for California Education. This research center for education is a cooperative project of the major universities in California, and has been supported by private funding. PACE has produced objective, independent analysis of some of the California reforms which have been relevant to California legislators. One project, for example, demonstrates how the new focus on more academic courses has displaced vocational courses.

### Indiana Performance-Based Accreditation and Reward

Indiana is another state that has statutorily instituted a performance-based accreditation system. Schools in Indiana can become fully accredited or receive probationary accreditation status. The following factors (indicators) are utilized for accreditation:

- Student Attendance Rates
- Graduation Rates
- Results of Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Program (ISTEP)
- Report on Reading and Mathematics Proficiencies
- Documentation of the implementation of professional development programs and evaluation plans for licensed school personnel

Additional standards such as staff - student ratios and health and safety also are reviewed by the Department of Education. If a school receives full accreditation, it will be reviewed every five years. If, on the other hand, a school receives probationary accreditation status after an on-site evaluation, then it is reviewed again in one year. Indiana's law also includes rewards for schools that have shown improvement in two of four areas. The monetary awards can be used for any educational purpose except athletics, salaries or salary bonuses.

### Arkansas Performance-Based Accreditation

Arkansas, like Nebraska and Indiana, has incorporated performance standards into its existing accreditation system. An accreditation process, based on education standards, was adopted in 1983 by the state of Arkansas. One part of their accreditation process is performance-based.

Testing of students occurs at the 3rd, 6th and 8th grade levels. The test includes state-developed, minimum competency standards for that particular grade level (tests also include some intuitive skills). They require 85 percent of a particular school's students taking the test to pass for accreditation. If they do not, the school must engage in a school improvement plan designed by the state.

Schools are given two years to correct deficiencies. If after two years, a school still does not have 85 percent passing, accreditation will not be denied as long as the school has shown reasonable progress toward correcting deficiencies.

### Michigan School Plan - State Intervention

As part of its recommendations, a Michigan School Finance Commission has proposed increasing state sales taxes to reduce property taxes by 40 percent. An accountability measure tied to the funding proposal calls for state assuming control of educationally bankrupt districts, defined as those falling below minimum student test scores. Failure to improve scores based on annual school improvement plans could result in state intervention. Similar plans have been in effect in Kentucky and South Carolina, but have met with limited success in New Jersey.

### Iowa - Productive School Model

The Iowa Association of School Boards has worked with the Iowa State Board of Education to develop strategies for excellence standards for Iowa schools. The IASB proposal focuses heavily on "effective schools research" and seeks to have each school evaluate itself against the effective school ideal.

**Florida - School Site Annual Performance Report Proposal**

Florida, in addition to a statewide assessment, proposes to require each school to report certain system-performance and statistical data to the public and parents.

As noted in Evaluating State Education Reforms by Michael Kirst, the reports by Florida public schools "would be published in local newspapers, posted prominently in the school, and, most important, sent home to the parents or guardians of students. The report would be the primary printed instrument by which clients could assess the effectiveness of their local school."

# Analysis of a Survey on Local School Evaluation Processes in Nebraska

Note: This analysis was prepared by Sandy Myers and Kim Davis.

## Analysis of a Survey on Local School Evaluation Processes in Nebraska

Surveys were sent to the 350 accredited school districts in Nebraska, with 200 surveys being returned by September 25, 1987, representing a 57.1% return rate. Ninety-eight percent of the surveys were completed by a superintendent or a principal. The plurality of the respondents had been in the field of education for 20-29 years. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents represented Class III districts, while 13% were employed by Class II districts. Forty-eight percent of the schools had populations of 176-420 students. The answers to the seven questions on the survey have been summarized and interpreted by staff as follows. For more detailed results, see Attachment 3.

*QUESTION #1: WHAT IMPACT DOES THE PROCESS OF EVALUATION HAVE ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN YOUR DISTRICT? PLEASE EXPLAIN.*

Findings: Fifty-one and one-half percent of the respondents stated that evaluation had a moderate impact, while 41% indicated a very significant impact. Consequently, over 90% of the respondents felt that evaluations had a noticeable impact on their school district.

- Of the 167 explanations that were received, 23 stated that evaluations served as the basis for improvement of board policy, budget issues, curriculum content, course offerings, extra curricular activities, etc.
- Eighteen respondents felt that evaluations promoted involvement with community, students and staff. However, 18 answers also emphasized that the budget is the deciding factor on whether changes are implemented.
- Sixteen respondents said evaluations resulted in changes, additions, deletions or modifications to programs, curriculum, facility, etc., while 13 pointed out that surveys identify strengths and weaknesses of current practices.
- Twelve replies stressed that, because the Board of Education reviews the recommendations of the evaluation committee, they become aware of the problems and needs of a district.
- Evaluations aid the district in developing priority goals and long and short range plans, was the reply given on 11 surveys, while 10 respondents pointed out that improvement is an on-going process and if school districts waited for the Comprehensive School Evaluation that is done only once every seven years, then they would be in trouble.

- Eight respondents indicated that evaluations help a school district become aware of and meet the current and future needs of the youth and school district.

*QUESTION #2: SCHOOLS HAVE THE PREROGATIVE OF CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS IN ADDITION TO THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL EVALUATION REQUIRED BY RULE 15 AS LOCAL NEEDS DICTATE. HAS YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT CONDUCTED ANY EVALUATIONS (OTHER THAN THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL EVALUATION) IN THE PAST TWO YEARS? PLEASE SPECIFY THE AREA OF EVALUATION, WHO IT WAS INITIATED BY AND IF IT RESULTED IN ANY CHANGES.*

Findings: Fifty-two percent of the respondents indicated that their school district had not conducted any other evaluations. Of the 47.5% that responded positively, 56.5% of the evaluations were initiated by the Administration, 27.5% by the School Board and 7.6% by a teacher. As a result of these evaluations, 91.3% of the respondents indicated that changes had been made in programs or operations. Curriculum was the primary area evaluated by school districts when school initiated evaluations were conducted.

- Of the 83 respondents that indicated their school district had conducted an evaluation in the area of Curriculum, 33 responses showed that the evaluation had resulted in the addition of programs or courses, 19 responses reflected curriculum changes or improvements, the curriculum was updated or revised in 12 responses and 6 respondents explained that programs were reduced or duplication was eliminated as a result of the evaluation.
- Twenty-one respondents stated that their district selected the area of Staff/Administration/Students/Board for an evaluation. These evaluations resulted in many changes including staff development, appraisal and evaluation, improved staff performance, lower teacher/pupil ratios and changes in the in-service programs.
- Facilities were mentioned in 20 responses, resulting in the initiation of bond issues, the development of short and long term goals, changes in the plan and process and consolidation of programs and buildings.
- Nineteen respondents chose the area of Overall School Goals/Performance which resulted in a restructuring of administrative style, expanded community services, a strengthened committee structure, changes in grade structure, the development of long and short term goals, improved graduation requirements, academic/extracurricular balance, higher expectations of students and improvement of classroom management.
- North Central Association was the response given on 10 surveys as the area of evaluation, with changes ranging from the modification of curriculum review procedures to the review of the goal setting process to the initiation of a pilot study.
- The area of Policy was chosen by 9 respondents for an evaluation, Questionnaires/Surveys/Newsletters by 8, Testing by 7 and School Reorganization by 4 respondents, with various changes being completed.

*QUESTION #3: PURSUANT TO YOUR MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL EVALUATION (REQUIRED BY RULE 15), PLEASE LIST THE RECOMMENDATIONS DETERMINED TO BE THE HIGHEST PRIORITY AND HOW THE RECOMMENDATION HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED.*

Findings: Respondents indicated that 90.6% of the highest priority recommendations listed on the survey from the comprehensive school evaluation were implemented and 9.4% were not implemented. Cost was the primary reason in 30.8% of the instances where a recommendation was not carried out. The two areas listed most frequently as the highest priority recommendations for change were (1) improving communications outside and inside of the school and (2) changes in curriculum - content/textbooks/development/continuity.

- Thirty-one respondents indicated that the comprehensive school evaluation resulted in a recommendation to improve communications outside and inside the school district. Individual districts were using various methods such as newsletters, public relations efforts through newspapers, and volunteer programs to communicate with patrons and additional staff meetings, daily bulletins, in-service and newsletters to facilitate staff communication.
- Thirty of those surveyed stated that changes in the area of curriculum were of high priority. These recommendations dealt with changes in curriculum content, curriculum development, the continuity of the curriculum and textbooks used. Some of the respondents formed curriculum committees to update, revise, and develop curriculum materials; others added courses and a few established committees to examine the continuity of the school's curriculum.
- Staff development was listed as a high priority for improvement by 27 survey respondents. School districts indicated that in-service programs were improved in all cases by increasing the frequency, changing the requirements and/or expanding the opportunities for staff development.
- Twenty-six survey respondents listed a high priority recommendation of the school evaluation to be an update or revision of board goals and procedures. All indicated that a process had been established to update policies or procedures or changes had been already implemented.
- The school evaluation resulted in a recommendation in 24 cases to either add a school guidance program or expand or improve the existing program. In ten schools, new guidance staff were hired and in a like number of schools the guidance programs were improved. Four schools chose not to implement the recommendation due to financial considerations.
- Nineteen individuals responded that curriculum guides were recommended for improvement in their schools. Seventeen of the schools updated, developed or obtained guides and two developed update procedures.
- Eighteen respondents indicated that a curriculum planning/review cycle needed to be established or improved in their school district. All of the schools implemented the recommendation by developing a process for curriculum planning.
- Three areas were identified by fifteen respondents as being high priority recommendations from the school evaluation. These recommendations centered on (1) adding or making computers available; (2) renovating or upgrading school buildings; and (3) adding, expanding or improving the gifted education program. Fourteen school

districts purchased or made computers available for students, ten school districts renovated or upgraded their school building and fourteen expanded, improved or added a gifted education program.

- Other areas with ten or more recommendations included: new school building (12); development of job descriptions (11); facility changes - carpet, lighting, circulation, energy, heating (11); improvement or expansion of library (10); improvement of learning climate, discipline, respect (10); and parental participation (10).

*QUESTION #4: THE PROCESS OF EVALUATION MAY REQUIRE A SCHOOL DISTRICT TO SEEK INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES SUCH AS THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, NSEA OR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS. PLEASE IDENTIFY THE SOURCE AND TYPE OF INFORMATION REQUESTED, HOW OFTEN THE INFORMATION IS REQUESTED AND THE VALUE OF THE INFORMATION ON A 1 THROUGH 5 SCALE, WITH 1 BEING VERY VALUABLE AND 5 BEING OF NO VALUE.*

Findings: The State Department of Education was listed most frequently as a source of information to use in school evaluations, with the average value of information being 1.66 on the 5 point scale (1 = very valuable through 5 = no value). The next most frequently used source of information was other schools with the information receiving a 1.46 average value. Information from ESUs had an average value of 1.44 and was the third chosen source of information.

- Of the 98 times that NDE was listed as a source of information, evaluation guidelines were the type of information requested in 17 instances. Information on curriculum guidelines was requested 14 times by respondents and rule clarification/regulation interpretation was asked for 11 times from NDE. Some of the other types of information requested from NDE were financial data, policy guidelines/standards, consultation, legal assistance, demographics and information on transportation.

- Information requested from other schools included 6 requests for curriculum data, 4 requests for evaluation instruments, 4 for information on practices/procedures, 2 for comparative information, 2 for innovative programs and 2 requests for financial information.

- When requesting information from ESUs, 5 respondents asked for curriculum data, 3 for evaluation instruments, 2 for financial data and 2 for information on gifted programs.

- Information requested from NASB included 3 requests for advice on legal issues and requests from NSEA focused around teacher salary data and teacher evaluations.

*QUESTION #5: IS THERE ANY INFORMATION THAT WOULD BE USEFUL IN EVALUATING YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT THAT IS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE? IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY.*

Findings: A majority (62.5%) of those responding to the survey did not feel that information useful for school evaluation purposes is currently unavailable.

- This indicates that a majority of those surveyed have access to information which is judged to be adequate and sufficient to evaluate their local school district.
- Thirty respondents chose not to answer this question.
- Only 45 individuals or 22.5% of the 200 survey respondents believe that additional information could be obtained which would be useful in a school evaluation.
- The type of information that is not currently available but was identified by the majority of individuals as being the most useful is data on student achievement scores, grouped according to similar school districts. Approximately 20% of those identifying additional information needs cited achievement test scores as useful unavailable information.
- Other items identified by more than one individual and ranked from the greatest number of responses to the least number include information on class sizes by department and program (5); follow-up information on the attainment of graduates (5); prior accreditation and evaluation studies of a district by the State Department of Education or North Central Association (4); information on what similar schools are doing (4); objective criteria defining quality education (3); curriculum offerings statewide (2); validated instruments used by schools (2); college entrance exam scores (2); and a comprehensive way to measure and compare student performance.

*QUESTION #6: PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING EDUCATIONAL INDICATORS IN TERMS OF THEIR VALUE IN EVALUATING YOUR SCHOOL SYSTEM, USING A 1 THROUGH 5 SCALE, WITH 1 BEING EXTREMELY VALUABLE AND 5 BEING OF NO VALUE.*

Findings: Attitudes of the community, students and parents were rated the most valuable indicator in terms of evaluating school districts. The next most important indicators to the respondents were teacher qualifications, student achievement scores and instructional time.

Fifteen indicators were listed on the survey for respondents to rate according to their perceived value. The following is a list of the indicators in order of highest value as chosen by respondents.

| Indicator | Average Value 1-Extremely Valuable Through 5-No Value |
|---|---|
| 1. Community attitude and support | 1.80 |
| 2. Attitudes of students and parents | 1.81 |
| 3. Teacher qualifications (experience, education) | 2.05 |
| 4. Student achievement scores | 2.08 |
| 5. Instructional time | 2.09 |
| 6. Assignment of teachers in endorsed areas | 2.10 |
| 7. Post graduation attainment of graduates | 2.12 |
| 8. Attendance rate | 2.18 |
| 9. Local requirements for graduation | 2.21 |
| 10. College entrance exam scores | 2.31 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 11. | High school graduation rates | 2.31 |
| 12. | Drop out rate | 2.39 |
| 13. | Enrollment in advanced courses | 2.42 |
| 14. | Teacher/pupil ratios | 2.47 |
| 15. | Expenditures per pupil | 2.63 |

***QUESTION #7: WHICH INDICATORS WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE AVAILABLE TO COMPARE YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT WITH DISTRICTS SIMILAR IN SIZE, GEOGRAPHY, AND COMMUNITY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS?***

Findings: Student achievement scores and expenditures per pupil were the indicators which respondents would most like to have available to compare their district to similar districts. The next most important indicators for comparison purposes would be those showing the post graduation attainment of graduates, college entrance exam scores and instructional time.

| | Indicator | Number of Times Chosen |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Student achievement scores | 66 |
| 2. | Expenditures per pupil | 48 |
| 3. | Post graduation attainment of graduates | 45 |
| 4. | College entrance exam scores | 44 |
| 5. | Instructional time | 42 |
| 6. | Drop out rate | 41 |
| 7. | Local requirements for graduation | 39 |
| 8. | Teacher/pupil ratios | 38 |
| 9. | Community attitudes and support | 37 |
| 10. | High school graduation rates | 36 |
| 11. | Assignment of teachers in endorsed areas | 36 |
| 12. | Attendance rate | 36 |
| 13. | Attitudes of students and parents | 33 |
| 14. | Teacher qualifications | 30 |
| 15. | Enrollment in advanced courses | 28 |

**Conclusion**

The process of evaluating schools has a very significant or moderate impact on school improvement as indicated by nine out of ten survey respondents (92.5%). School evaluations have provided the impetus for improvements in the provision of educational services throughout the state, although it is important to be aware that budget constraints may preclude the implementation of specific recommendations.

Over half (52%) of those responding to the survey stated that their school district did not conduct any evaluations in the last two years in addition to the evaluation required for state accreditation purposes. The school districts (47.5%) which have conducted locally initiated evaluations indicate that the majority of these evaluations were proposed by the school administration. Over 91% resulted in changes in programs or operations and the primary area of evaluation was curriculum.

School district survey responses showed that over 90% of the highest priority recommendations from the comprehensive school evaluation required for state accreditation purposes were implemented. This statistic should be analyzed with the understanding that the survey respondents were able to prioritize the recommendations from the school evaluation in terms of importance from their perspective. In almost one-third of the instances where a recommendation was not carried out, cost was the determining factor. The areas most frequently recommended for change were internal and external communications and curriculum.

School districts use the State Department of Education most frequently as an outside source when additional information is required for a school evaluation. Other school districts are the next most frequently accessed outside source of information and both sources were perceived as being a provider of valuable assistance to schools. A majority of the survey respondents believe that information useful in school evaluations is available currently. The information most often identified as being useful but unavailable is data on student achievement scores, grouped according to similar school districts.

The most valuable educational indicators in terms of evaluating school districts are attitudes of the community and attitudes of students and parents. The next most important indicators according to respondents are teacher qualifications, student achievement scores and instructional time. The indicators which educators would like to have available to compare their district to similar districts, in priority order, are student achievement scores, expenditures per pupil, post graduation attainment of graduates, college entrance exam scores and instructional time.

This data shows that student achievement scores and instructional time are thought to be high in value to school districts for internal evaluation purposes and also for comparison purposes to other districts. Respondents also indicated that information on student achievement scores is the most useful piece of data that is currently unavailable to schools.

Respondents ranked expenditures per pupil as second in importance as an indicator to compare their district with other school districts but last in importance as a tool for internal evaluations. The reverse is true for attitudes of students and parents and teacher qualifications. These indicators are perceived to be valuable to a school district for internal evaluation purposes but of little value for comparison purposes with other school districts.

An important observation to make from the survey data is that the primary area identified as the focus of the majority of school evaluations, whether initiated locally or for state accreditation purposes, is curriculum. It may also be of interest to note that a correlation may be seen between ranking internal and external communications as the number one problem area identified by the school evaluations for accreditation purposes and a corresponding ranking of the most valuable educational indicators as being attitudes of the community, students and parents. Thus, an inference can be drawn that attitudes of patrons, staff and students are judged to be important but poor communications may have an adverse effect on the most valuable indicator of educational quality as perceived by school district personnel.

# Attachment 1

## The Nebraska Legislature's Role and Mission Statement For Public Schools, Adopted 1984

Section 1. The Legislature hereby finds and declares that the mission of the State of Nebraska, through its public school system, is to:

(1) Offer each individual the opportunity to develop competence in the basic skills of communications, computations, and knowledge of basic facts concerning the environment, history, and society;

(2) Offer each individual the opportunity to develop higher order thinking and problem-solving skills by means of adequate preparation in mathematics, science, the social sciences, and foreign languages and through appropriate and progressive use of technology;

(3) Instill in each individual the ability and desire to continue learning throughout his or her life;

(4) Encourage knowledge and understanding of political society and democracy in order to foster active participation therein;

(5) Encourage the creative potential of each individual through exposure to the fine arts and humanities;

(6) Encourage a basic understanding of and aid the development of good health habits; and

(7) Offer each individual the opportunity for career exploration and awareness.

Section 2. (1) The Legislature recognizes that education as an investment in human resources is fundamental to the quality of life and economic development of Nebraskans. The Legislature further recognizes that public education faces ever growing challenges in an era of accelerated change, sophisticated information systems, high technology, and global markets. Therefore, it is the intent of the Legislature to join with local governing bodies in a strong and ongoing partnership to further advance the quality and responsiveness of Nebraska's education system.

(2) It is the intent of the Legislature to encourage and support all public schools in this state in order to carry out the state's mission to promote quality education as described in section 1 of this act. Attracting and retaining highly qualified instructors in order to foster and improve a student's learning experience is a key factor in quality education. The Legislature intends to foster high standards of performance for teachers, students, administrators, and programs of instruction in the public schools so that each person of school age shall have the opportunity to receive a quality education regardless of the size, wealth, or geographic location of the school district in which such person resides.

(3) The Legislature intends that the schools meet the individual needs and develop the particular skills of all young Nebraskans. The Legislature further intends that all persons who graduate from Nebraska high schools possess certain minimum levels of knowledge, skills, and understanding.

(4) The Legislature recognizes that the resources of the state should be used efficiently to support the public school system of this state. The Legislature intends to foster, encourage, and, where necessary, mandate the cooperation of all public education service

providers, including public school districts, educational service units, and the State Department of Education, in order to achieve a quality education system.

# Attachment 2

## LR 181 Survey Questionnaire on Local School Evaluation Processes

# LR 181

## SCHOOL EVALUATION SURVEY

**Please fill out the following questions and return by September 15, 1987. Feel free to attach additional information. All data received by that date will be included in the survey results. Return completed survey to:**

**Senator Ron Withem**
**Legislative District #14**
**State Capitol**
**Lincoln, Nebraska 68509**

**1. What impact does the process of evaluation have on school improvement in your district? (Circle one)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Very Significant** | **Moderate Impact** | **Little Impact** | **Insignificant** |

**Please explain:**

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

______________________________________________

**2. Schools have the prerogative of conducting evaluations in addition to the Comprehensive School Evaluation required by Rule 15 as local needs dictate. Has your school district conducted any evaluations (other than the Comprehensive School Evaluation) in the past two years?**

**__yes __no**

**If yes, complete the following:**

| Area of Evaluation | Please specify who initiated the evaluation (School Board, Administration, teacher, etc.) | Specify if the evaluation resulted in any changes in programs or operations |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

3. **Pursuant to your most recently completed Comprehensive School Evaluation (required by Rule 15), please complete the following:**

| Recommendations determined to be the highest priority | How has the recommendation been implemented. If not, please explain |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

4. The process of evaluation may require a school district to seek information from other sources, such as the State Department of Education, NSEA or other organizations. Please complete the following chart regarding the information that you request. (Enter "none" if appropriate)

| Sources of information requested | Specify type of information requested | How often information requested | Value of information 1-very valuable 5-no value (Rate on scale 1 through 5) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

5. Is there any information that would be useful in evaluating your school district that is currently unavailable?

__yes __no

If yes, please specify:

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

6. **Using the following scale please rate the following educational indicators in terms of their value in evaluating your school system.**

   1. **Extremely valuable**
   2. **Very valuable**
   3. **Somewhat valuable**
   4. **Little value**
   5. **No value**

   **(Circle the appropriate response)**

**High school graduation rates**

1 2 3 4 5

**Attitudes of students and parents**

1 2 3 4 5

**Teacher qualifications (experience, education)**

1 2 3 4 5

**Student achievement scores**

1 2 3 4 5

**Community attitude and support**

1 2 3 4 5

**Assignment of teachers in endorsed areas**

1 2 3 4 5

**Enrollment in advanced courses**

1 2 3 4 5

**Teacher/pupil ratios**

1 2 3 4 5

**Instructional time**

1 2 3 4 5

Local requirements for graduation

1 2 3 4 5

Post graduation attainment of graduates (i.e. % going on to higher education, % completing higher education, % entering the armed forces, % entering the work force)

1 2 3 4 5

Drop out rate

1 2 3 4 5

College entrance exam scores

1 2 3 4 5

Attendance rate

1 2 3 4 5

Expenditures per pupil

1 2 3 4 5

7. Which indicators would you like to have available to compare your school district with districts similar in size, geography, and community socio-economic status? (please specify)

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

NAME (Optional) ____________________________

How many years have you been in the field of education? __________

Would you like a copy of the results of this survey? ___Yes ___No

This survey was filled out by:

___Superintendent/Principal
___County Superintendent
___Teacher
___Other________________

# Attachment 3

## LR 181 School Evaluation Survey Results

Note: The survey results were compiled by Sandy Myers and Kim Davis

## SCHOOL EVALUATION SURVEY RESULTS

### DATA ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT RESPONDED:

| Class of School District | Number in Each Class Responding | Percent of Each Class Responding |
|---|---|---|
| Class 1 | 1 | 0.5 |
| Class 2 | 26 | 13.0 |
| Class 3 | 136 | 68.0 |
| Class 4 | 1 | 0.5 |
| Class 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Class 6 | 12 | 6.0 |
| Class 7 | 8 | 4.0 |
| Class 8 | 2 | 1.0 |
| Class 9 | 14 | 7.0 |

### DATA ON ENROLLMENT IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT RESPONDED:

| Enrollment of School District | Number Responding | Percent Responding |
|---|---|---|
| 0 - 175 | 45 | 22.5 |
| 176 - 420 | 96 | 48.0 |
| 421 - 1,115 | 39 | 19.5 |
| 1,116 - 1,575 | 8 | 4.0 |
| 1,576 - 2,780 | 2 | 1.0 |
| Over 2,781 | 10 | 5.0 |

*QUESTION #1: WHAT IMPACT DOES THE PROCESS OF EVALUATION HAVE ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN YOUR DISTRICT?*

| | Number Responding | Percent Responding |
|---|---|---|
| Very Significant | 82 | 41.0 |
| Moderate Impact | 103 | 51.50 |
| Little Impact | 12 | 6.0 |
| Insignificant | 1 | 0.5 |
| No Response | 2 | 1.0 |

**EXPLANATION:**

| # of Responses | |
|---|---|
| 23 | Basis for improvement (Board policy, budget, curriculum content, course offerings, extracurricular activities, etc.). |
| 18 | Promotes involvement with community, students, staff (allows them to express their feelings). |
| 18 | Budget is the deciding factor whether many changes are implemented. |
| 16 | Results in changes, additions, deletions, modifications to programs, curriculum, facility, etc. |
| 13 | Shows strengths and weaknesses of current practices. |
| 12 | Board of Education reviews recommendations of evaluation committee, becomes aware of problems and needs and responds to them. |
| 11 | Develop priority goals, long and short range plans. |
| 10 | Improvement is an on-going process, would be in trouble if only wait for 7 year evaluation. |
| 8 | Helps become aware of and meet the current and future needs and issues of the youth and school district. |
| 5 | Many of the needs identified in internal study had already been identified in long and short range goals (reinforcement). |
| 4 | Whether recommendations are implemented depends on follow-up of administration. |
| 3 | Self evaluation (internal evaluation) is very beneficial. |
| 2 | Recommendations from an outside source are very helpful, hard to recognize some problems when work so closely to it. |
| 2 | Brings faculty closer, gives staff a more comprehensive view of the school program. |
| 2 | Evaluation is important in the determination of and the retention of quality personnel and programs. |
| 2 | Have developed an on-going evaluation for teachers, classroom instruction has improved dramatically (more beneficial than 7 year evaluation). |

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 | Help clarify purpose and mission. |
| 2 | Sometimes recommendations are not based on accurate information (knowledge) of school district. |
| 2 | Immediate impact, but fades with time. |
| 2 | Difficult to see how much effect evaluation and implementation has on the learning process. (Teachers don't always view evaluation as a growth and improvement situation.) |
| 1 | Allows comparison of other programs. |
| 1 | Must consider what is ideal and what is reality. |
| 1 | With declining enrollment, changes are not so much for improvement, but result in reductions. |
| 1 | Completely against present format. |
| 1 | Difficult to get a follow-up after visitation; many are just happy it's over. |
| 1 | Little is done towards implementing goals of evaluation. |
| 1 | Make sure not petty complaints from a few discontent teachers or patrons. |
| 1 | Final report usually reflects what the administration wants the public to know. |
| 1 | Formal process ensures that evaluation is carried out. |
| 1 | Lay school board members untrained in business practices such as formal evaluation and goal setting, prefer to use subjective decision-making processes. |

*QUESTION #2: SCHOOLS HAVE THE PREROGATIVE OF CONDUCTING EVALUATIONS IN ADDITION TO THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL EVALUATION REQUIRED BY RULE 15 AS LOCAL NEEDS DICTATE. HAS YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT CONDUCTED ANY EVALUATIONS (OTHER THAN THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL EVALUATION) IN THE PAST TWO YEARS? PLEASE SPECIFY THE AREA OF EVALUATION, WHO IT WAS INITIATED BY AND IF IT RESULTED IN ANY CHANGES.*

| Conducted Additional Evaluations | Number Responding | Percent Responding |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 95 | 47.5 |
| No | 104 | 52.0 |
| No Response | 1 | 0.5 |

| Evaluation Initiated By | Number Responding | Percent Administration |
|---|---|---|
| Administration | 156 | 56.5 |
| School Board | 76 | 27.5 |
| Teacher | 21 | 7.6 |
| Other | 16 | 5.8 |
| Community | 3 | 1.1 |
| No Response | 4 | 1.5 |

| If Evaluation Resulted in Changes | Number Responding | Percent Responding |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 178 | 91.3 |
| No | 13 | 6.7 |
| No Response | 4 | 2.0 |

| # of Responses | Area of Evaluation | Changes Made |
|---|---|---|
| 83 | Curriculum: | |
| 33 | Curriculum | Added prog.(s), courses(s) |
| | 1 Aerobics | |
| | 1 Art | |
| | 1 Business Ed. | |
| | 3 Computer (Computer Tech, Voc. Computer Art) | |
| | 2 Drug & Alcohol Curriculum | |
| | 2 English | |
| | 2 Gifted | |
| | 1 Guidance | |
| | 1 Language Arts | |
| | 3 Math (Algebra) | |
| | 1 Media (elem. & secondary) | |
| | 1 Music - Jr. High | |
| | 1 Reading Program | |
| | 1 Resource Program | |
| | 2 Science | |
| | 1 Social Studies | |
| | 2 Voc. Education Curriculum | |
| | 1 Voc. Home Economics | |
| | 6 Not Specified | |
| 19 | Curriculum | Changes/improvements |
| 12 | Curriculum | Updated/revised |
| 6 | Curriculum | Reduced program(s)/duplic. |
| | 1 Agriculture | |
| | 2 Home Economics | |
| | 1 Music | |
| | 2 Not Specified | |
| 3 | Curriculum | Annual evaluations |
| 2 | Curriculum | Change number of periods |

|  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | 2 | Curriculum | Tougher grad. requirements |
|  | 1 | Curriculum | Changed required course to elective |
|  | 1 | Curriculum | Priorities established, goals set & accomplished |
|  | 1 | Curriculum | Staff develop. now geared toward perceived needs |
|  | 1 | Curriculum | Developed course outline |
|  | 1 | Curriculum | Under review |
|  | 1 | Curriculum | No justification to start a review |
| 21 | Staff/Admin./Students/Board: |  |  |
|  | 1 | Staff develop. & evaluation | In process |
|  | 1 | Teachers | Each teacher provided evaluation in their area |
|  | 1 | Teacher appraisal | Revision in teacher appraisal process |
|  | 1 | Staff appraisal | Minor procedural operations |
|  | 1 | Staff performance | Improved |
|  | 1 | Staff | Higher expectations |
|  | 1 | Staff | Prog. changes have resulted |
|  | 1 | Staff | Many changes |
|  | 1 | Staffing guidance | Lower teacher/pupil ratios |
|  | 1 | Teachers | Made aware of Sec. 79-213 (NE Stat.) on Americanism |
|  | 1 | Personnel performance | Changes made |
|  | 1 | Personnel | Priorities established, goals set & accomplished |
|  | 1 | Insurance programs | Changes were made |
|  | 1 | Administration/staff | Semi-annual evaluation of in-service, staff devel., textbook adoption & gifted program |
|  | 1 | Administration | Job descrip. in process |
|  | 1 | Principal | Changed 1/2 elementary principal, 1/2 secondary to full time (K-12) |
|  | 1 | Superintendent | Keeps board aware of all areas of superint. duties |
|  | 1 | Students | Curriculum changes |
|  | 1 | Students performance | Change of emphasis on teacher areas |
|  | 1 | School Board performance | Internal working |
|  | 1 | School Board | No changes |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 20 | Facilities: | |
| 4 | New school | Bond issue |
| 4 | Facility and enrollment projections | Short & long term goals |
| 4 | Bldgs. and grounds | Changes in plant |
| 2 | Facility changes | In the process |
| 1 | Building needs | Bldg. consolidation |
| 1 | Overall operation | Change of programs |
| 1 | Building program | Completed |
| 1 | Lands and program | Changes made |
| 1 | Building | New bldg./add'n/ renovation |
| 1 | Energy conservation | Completed |
| 19 | Overall School Goals/Performance: | |
| 1 | Long & short range goals | Annual board retreat used to evaluate change & set new goals |
| 1 | Long & short term goals | Reflect changes from evaluation of all aspects of the district's oper'tn |
| 1 | Mission | Community based mission, based on kids' needs |
| 1 | Local task force for excellence in educ. (3 yr. study) | Improved grad. require'mts<br>academic/extracurricular balance, home-work policy, higher expec'tns of students, improvement of reading, spelling programs, learning climate/classroom mngt. improved |
| 1 | School district effectiveness | Management by objectives (MBO's) developed by buildings & departments |
| 1 | School instr./effectiveness | Changes made |
| 1 | Classroom instruction/ student achievement | Identify specific objective evaluations from test results; developed tests by grade levels |
| 1 | Communication | Changes made |
| 1 | Organizational communication | Decentralized system participation |
| 1 | Enrichment | Content & organizational changes |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Overall operation including staffing, curriculum, facilities, grade structure | Resulted in building programs, a change in staffing & grade structure & revision of curriculum |
| 1 | Overall excellence | Changes in grading, placement, philosophy, building structure and teaching philosophy |
| 1 | District evaluation process | Special program |
| 1 | School-wide | McRel still working on the process<br>Board now sets long-range goals & an annual evaluation instrument was designed |
| 1 | Total school | Evaluation just took place, not enough time yet to review & set priorities |
| 1 | Total school | Strengthen comm. structure |
| 1 | Total school | Several changes |
| 1 | Total school | Restructure of admin. style & curriculum development |
| 1 | Total school | Expanded community servs., worked on salary & benefits, began campus ministry program, strengthened curriculum |
| 10 | North Central Association: | |
| 3 | NCA | Positive changes/adjustments in progs. |
| 1 | NCA | Modified curriculum review procedures |
| 1 | NCA | Bldg. modifications/ teacher preparation changes |
| 1 | NCA | Violations according to standards |
| 1 | NCA | Addressed in order of priority |
| 1 | NCA | Pilot study |
| 1 | NCA | Review & goal setting process |
| 1 | NCA | No response |

9 Policy:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Policy development | Changes made |
| 2 | Board policy | Updated/changed |
| 1 | Policy manual | In process |
| 1 | Board policy | Present board not accepting some policies, result is decrease in accreditation compliance to minimum |
| 1 | Safety | Written procedures |
| 1 | Vision planning strategy | New programs basis for revised philosophy goals |
| 1 | Total system strategic planning | Developed strategic plan in eleven district areas |

8 Quest./Surveys/Newsletters-Climate:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | School program questionnaires | Examined curriculum areas as well as support servs. as a result in infor. gathered |
| 1 | Parent survey | Parents supportive of what are measuring |
| 1 | Parents general evaluation of total school program | Annual effort resulting in many program changes |
| 1 | Parent/community attitude | Goal development & parent-sharing sessions |
| 1 | School climate/satisfaction survey | Listen to parents & community & implement suggestions in order to strengthen program |
| 1 | School climate | Changes in staff develop. programs to address problems identified |
| 1 | Climate survey | Minor changes |
| 1 | Newsletter | Sent to every residence monthly, ask for input |

7 Testing:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Testing | New tests |
| 1 | Student subject area testing | Reading/Language Arts studies for revision |
| 1 | Test results | Changed gifted prog., physics prog. & more options in math were made available |
| 1 | Standardized tests | Very minor changes |
| 1 | Achievement tests | Report to parents & board; test results are high & as a result have made changes in programs & |

|  |  |  |
|---|---|---|
|  |  | operations |
| 1 | ACT scores | Report composite results to board & public. Also compare with state & national results |
| 1 | SAT | Changed policies & developed procedures |
| 4 | Reorganization: |  |
| 1 | School reorganization | Changed to 7-8, 9-12 under one secondary principal |
| 1 | School reorganization | Community wanted to continue operation of school, community willing to pay high cost of local operations & solicit suggestions |
| 1 | School reorganization | Nothing yet |
| 1 | School reorganization | Dropped reorganization & curtailed some extra curricular activities - used assistance coaches |
| 4 | Double A Accreditation: |  |
| 1 | AA | Comments from committee utilized in prog. devel. |
| 1 | AA | Improvements in curriculum, course offerings, & personal growth of staff |
| 1 | AA | In progress |
| 1 | AA | No response |
| 19 | Other: |  |
| 3 | Gifted | Comp. 3-year plan presented<br>Teacher assigned 1/4 time to be consultant<br>Guidelines changed |
| 2 | Special education | Increased services & staff<br>Procedural changes |
| 2 | Transportation/Busing | New parking - loading area<br>No change |
| 2 | School calendar | Changes made<br>Reused |
| 2 | Activities | Fund raising<br>Limited # of activities |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Media | New course description, computerized card catalog |
| 1 | Guidance program | Completed improvements |
| 1 | Funding | Changes in # of staff and budget cuts |
| 1 | 7th grade interdisciplinary | Pilot project teaching |
| 1 | Full day kindergarten | Adopted |
| 1 | Length of school day | Changed |
| 1 | Follow-up of graduates | Report drop-out rate to NDE for improvement in school curriculum, etc. |
| 1 | Textbooks | Many changes |

*QUESTION #3: PURSUANT TO YOUR MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL EVALUATION (REQUIRED BY RULE 15), PLEASE LIST THE RECOMMENDATIONS DETERMINED TO BE THE HIGHEST PRIORITY AND HOW THE RECOMMENDATION HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED.*

No response to this question on 44 surveys or 22%.

| If Recommendation Implemented | Number Responding | Percent Responding |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 501 | 90.6 |
| No | 52 | 9.4 |

When the recommendation was not implemented, cost was stated as the reason in 16 of the 52 responses or 30.8%.

| # of Responses | Area of Evaluation | Changes Made |
|---|---|---|
| 214 | Curriculum: | |
| 117 | Specific Curriculum Areas | Added, expanded or improved courses |

20 Guidance
15 Gifted
9 Library
8 Media
8 Foreign Language
7 Computer
5 Drug and Alcohol
4 Art
4 Special Education
3 Math
3 Reading
3 Physical Education
3 Critical Thinking
3 Music
2 Health
2 English
2 Sex Education
2 Industrial Arts

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2 Vocational Education<br>2 Writing<br>1 Social Studies<br>1 Religion<br>1 Spelling<br>1 Enrichment Program<br>1 Remedial Math<br>1 Science<br>1 Speech<br>1 Visual or Performing Arts<br>1 Home Economics<br>1 Vocational Agriculture | |
| | 9 | Specific Curriculum Areas<br>4 Guidance<br>2 Health<br>1 Music<br>1 Library<br>1 Vocational Agriculture | Did not make changes |
| | 30 | Curriculum - Content/Textbks/ Development/Continuity | (29) Curriculum changes<br>(1) No changes made |
| | 19 | Curriculum Guides | (17) Developed, updated or obtained guides<br>(2) Developed update procedures |
| | 18 | Curric. Planning/Review Cycle | Process developed |
| | 9 | New staff | (7) Added<br>(2) No changes |
| | 8 | Additional Course Offerings | Added courses |
| | 2 | Curriculum Evaluations | Implemented |
| | 2 | Curriculum Model K-12 | (1) Added<br>(1) No changes |
| 105 | | Facility: | |
| | 15 | Renovate/Upgrade school bldg. | (10) Renovated or upgraded<br>(5) No changes |
| | 12 | New school building | (10) Acquired/constructed<br>(2) No changes |
| | 11 | Facility changes | Changes made or underway |
| | 9 | Additional instructional space | Acquired |
| | 7 | Inadequate library/media space | (6) Improved or acquired<br>(1) No changes |
| | 6 | Improve maintenance | (5) Improved or added staff<br>(1) No changes |
| | 3 | New Gym, Dressing Room, Restrooms | (1) Improved<br>(2) No changes |
| | 3 | Improve facilities | Project in the works |

|  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  | complete |
|  | 3 | Additional office space | Acquired |
|  | 2 | Improve instructional space | Improved |
|  | 2 | Improve locker room | Improved or studying |
|  | 2 | New shop facilities | No changes |
|  | 2 | Room/office changes for accessibility | Changes made |
|  | 2 | Resurface track and/or improve stadium | Completed |
|  | 2 | Close school building | (1) Closed<br>(1) No changes made |
|  | 2 | New Roof | Acquired |
|  | 2 | Maintain/repair parking facil. | Upgraded |
|  | 2 | Long-Range bldg. restoration plan | Adopted |
|  | 1 | Guidance/Health Complex | Classroom renovated |
|  | 1 | Groundwater problem | Pumping system installed |
|  | 1 | Study movement of school | Studied |
|  | 1 | Study temperature settings in buildings | Energy audit completed |
|  | 1 | Window Repair | Completed |
|  | 1 | Meet fire/electrical code | Have complied |
|  | 1 | Track | No changes |
|  | 1 | Repair gym floor | Repaired |
|  | 1 | Wood floor on gym | No changes |
|  | 1 | Inadequate gym seating | Expanded or improved |
|  | 1 | Change Kindergarten Room | No changes |
|  | 1 | Change bus traffic route | Rerouted |
|  | 1 | Separate 1st and 2nd | Separated combined classrooms |
|  | 1 | Improved playground | Improved |
|  | 1 | Contract for football field respond. | Contracted |
|  | 1 | No Stage | No changes |
|  | 1 | Inadequate art room storage space | Space improved |
|  | 1 | Unavailable library facilities | Improved |
| 102 |  | Administration: |  |
|  | 31 | Better communications outside and inside school | (30) Newsletters, in-serv., public relations, etc.<br>(1) No response |
|  | 11 | Job descriptions developed | Developed |
|  | 10 | Improve Learning Climate/ Respect | Improved |
|  | 9 | Staff/Teacher Evaluations | Changed procedures or instruments |
|  | 7 | High Expectations of Prof. Staff by Community | Improved or added new team |
|  | 7 | Increase Administrative Staff | (4) Increased<br>(3) No changes |
|  | 6 | Change/Relieve administrators | (3) Changed |

|  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | of certain responsibilities | (1) No changes |
|  | 5 | Rearrange staff loads | (4) Rearranged<br>(1) No changes |
|  | 5 | Improve scheduling of classes | Improved |
|  | 3 | Salary Schedule adjustments/updates | Completed |
|  | 2 | Better orientation for new staff | Improved |
|  | 2 | Recruit younger staff/minorities | Improved |
|  | 1 | Community education involvement | Improved |
|  | 1 | Attendance at national conventions | Encouraged |
|  | 1 | Community Needs Assessment | Completed |
|  | 1 | New instruments for administrator evaluation | Obtained |
| 55 |  | School Board: |  |
|  | 26 | Update/revise current board policies & procedures | Improved |
|  | 10 | Clarify lines of communication for parents | Improved |
|  | 6 | Develop Board Skills | (5) In-service<br>(1) No changes |
|  | 4 | Statement of goals & obj. | Developed |
|  | 3 | Long-range planning cycle | Developed |
|  | 2 | Attendance at National Conventions | Encouraged |
|  | 1 | Reduce Board Sessions | Reduced |
|  | 1 | Adjust programs to Rules and Regulations | Adjusted |
|  | 1 | Furnish Bd. agenda to members | Furnished |
|  | 1 | Community attendance at metgs. | Encouraged |
| 40 |  | Staff: |  |
|  | 27 | In-service Staff Development | Expanded or improved |
|  | 6 | Faculty sharing of teaching models | Improved |
|  | 2 | Develop skills in sensitivity and confidentiality | Developed |
|  | 2 | Endorsement of teachers | Improved |
|  | 1 | Teacher invov. in decisions | Improved |
|  | 1 | Law Pupil/Teacher Ratio | No changes |
|  | 1 | Staff turnover | Reduced |
| 30 |  | Equipment/Ades: |  |
|  | 15 | Computers or computer center | (14) Added or made avail.<br>(1) No response |
|  | 3 | Media Equip.& Resources | Purchased |
|  | 2 | Playground Equipment | Added |
|  | 2 | Upgrade & maintain bus fleet | Improved |
|  | 1 | Driver Education Car | Purchased |
|  | 1 | Freezer space for Hot Lunch | Increased |

|  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | Program |  |
|  | 1 | Oven space for Hot Lunch Prg. | Increased |
|  | 1 | Equipment | Added |
|  | 1 | Equipment Replacement Program | Developed |
|  | 1 | Bus Radios | Added |
|  | 1 | Exhaust Hood | Added |
|  | 1 | Visual Aides for Classroom | Purchased |
| 14 |  | Students: |  |
|  | 6 | Student participation to form goals | (5) Improved<br>(1) No changes |
|  | 4 | Staff/Student Rapport | Joint projects |
|  | 2 | Better orientation ofr Jr./Sr. High | Improved |
|  | 2 | Handbooks for students | Improved |
| 7 |  | School Business Functions: |  |
|  | 2 | Budget reserve, financial base | Increased |
|  | 1 | Computers for bus. functions | Used |
|  | 1 | Establish sinking fund | No changes |
|  | 1 | Establish endowment fund | Established |
|  | 1 | Compile department budgets | Compiled |
|  | 1 | Better student record keeping | Improved |
| 30 |  | Other: |  |
|  | 5 | Graduation requirements | Increased or upgraded |
|  | 4 | School Hot Lunch Program | Improved |
|  | 3 | Consolidation/reorganization | Studied |
|  | 2 | Fewer extracurricular activ. | No changes |
|  | 2 | Length of school day/year | Revised |
|  | 2 | Cooperative school involvement | Increased or improved |
|  | 2 | Homework practices | Expanded |
|  | 1 | Awards Program for Junior High | Established |
|  | 1 | Bus Safety Program | Established |
|  | 1 | Reduce sports events | No response |
|  | 1 | Improve educ. for minorities | Improved |
|  | 1 | Athletic Task Force | Created |
|  | 1 | Graduates success after school | Good |
|  | 1 | School grade grouping | Changed |
|  | 1 | Sportsmanship | Improved |
|  | 1 | Cooperative business involv. | Promoted |
|  | 1 | Middle school changed | Improved |

*QUESTION #4: THE PROCESS OF EVALUATION MAY REQUIRE A SCHOOL DISTRICT TO SEEK INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES SUCH AS THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, NSEA OR OTHER ORGANIZATIONS. PLEASE IDENTIFY THE SOURCE AND TYPE OF INFORMATION REQUESTED, HOW OFTEN THE INFORMATION IS REQUESTED AND THE VALUE OF THE INFORMATION ON A 1 THROUGH 5 SCALE, WITH 1 BEING VERY VALUABLE AND 5 BEING OF NO VALUE.*

| Source of Information requested | Number Responding | Average Value 1 = Very Valuable 5 = No Value |
|---|---|---|
| NDE | 98 | 1.66 |
| Other Schools | 27 | 1.46 |
| ESUS | 20 | 1.44 |
| NASB | 9 | 1.28 |
| NSEA | 6 | 2.00 |
| Professional Assoc. | 5 | 2.30 |
| NCA | 3 | 1.00 |

| Source of Information | Number* Responding | Type of Information |
|---|---|---|
| NE Dept. of Educ. | 17 | Evaluation Guidelines (self study) |
| | 14 | Curriculum Guidelines/Regulations |
| | 11 | Rule clarification/regulation interpretation |
| | 10 | Financial data (budget) |
| | 10 | Policy guidelines/standards; procedures (on forms, etc.) |
| | 5 | Consultation/Liaison/Assistance/Legal |
| | 5 | Teacher/pupil ratios, ADA, ADM; class size; demographics, projection of enrollments; student loans |
| | 4 | Transportation |
| | 3 | Certification |
| | 3 | Accreditation |
| | 3 | Statistical Data |
| | 3 | Information gathering/ measurement tools |
| | 2 | In-service for teachers |
| | 2 | Sample survey |
| | 1 | Teacher endorsements |
| | 1 | Personnel |
| | 1 | Personnel recommendations for outside access |
| | 1 | Facility study |
| | 1 | Multi-cultural education |
| | 1 | Drug education |
| | 1 | Gifted programs |
| | 1 | Hot lunch programs |
| | 1 | Test scores |
| | 1 | NCA forms |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | 1 | Grants |
| | 1 | Reorganization study |
| | 1 | Film - How to conduct a study |
| | 1 | All areas |
| Other Schools | 6 | Curriculum |
| | 4 | Evaluation instruments |
| | 4 | Practices/Procedures |
| | 2 | Comparative information |
| | 2 | Innovative programs |
| | 2 | Financial information |
| | 1 | Research and implementation ideas |
| | 1 | Grading procedures |
| | 1 | Achievement philosophies |
| | 1 | Report booklet |
| | 1 | Surveys |
| | 1 | Copy of study |
| | 1 | Gifted education materials |
| | 1 | Program development |
| | 1 | Accreditation |
| | 1 | Certification |
| | 1 | Legal |
| | 1 | Personnel |
| | 1 | Pay schedules |
| | 1 | All areas |
| Ed. Service Units | 5 | Curriculum |
| | 3 | Evaluation instruments |
| | 2 | Financial data |
| | 2 | Gifted programs |
| | 1 | New programs, methods |
| | 1 | Interpretation of program offerings |
| | 1 | Staff development |
| | 1 | In-service |
| | 1 | District needs |
| | 1 | Self study |
| | 1 | Accreditation |
| | 1 | Certification |
| | 1 | Legal |
| | 1 | Computer information |
| | 1 | Printing |
| NASB | 3 | Legal issues |
| | 1 | Administration |
| | 1 | Curriculum |
| | 1 | Policy |
| | 1 | Salary schedule |
| | 1 | Statistical information |
| NSEA | 3 | Teacher data (salaries/benefits) |
| | 2 | Teacher evaluation/performance |

|  |  |  |
|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | Ranking of states |
| Prof. Associations | 1 | Administration |
|  | 1 | Curriculum |
|  | 1 | Educational information update |
|  | 1 | Gifted program organization |
|  | 1 | Personnel benefits |
|  | 1 | Staff development |
| NCA | 2 | Evaluation criteria |
|  | 1 | Standards |
| Other Universities | 5 | Curriculum |
|  | 2 | Research |
|  | 1 | Facility |
|  | 1 | Finance |
|  | 1 | Gifted |
|  | 1 | Grants |
|  | 1 | In-service |
|  | 1 | Policy |
|  | 1 | Ranking of school districts |
|  | 1 | Teaching class |
| State Colleges | 2 | Curriculum |
|  | 1 | In-service |
| State Agencies/ | 1 | Social services - student information |
| County Offices | 1 | State agencies - health curriculum |
|  | 1 | County Superintendent - budget/law |
|  | 1 | County office - finance |
| National & State Organizations | 3 | NCSA - Update on issues & trends/legal info. |
|  | 3 | ERS (Educational Research Service) - finance/research findings |
|  | 2 | State & Nat'l. Assoc. - Program updates, etc. |
|  | 2 | ASCO - Effective curriculum & school research |
|  | 1 | Conference on Educational Adm. for Schools for the Deaf - certification standards |
|  | 1 | NE Catholic Ed. Assn. - Curriculum, methods & programs |
|  | 1 | ASBO - Business matters |
|  | 1 | Nat'l. Study of School Evaluation - help on evaluations |
|  | 1 | Nat'l. Alternative School - school |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | climate criteria |
| | 1 | NASSP - curriculum content |
| | 1 | NASSP - models for evaluation |
| | 1 | McRel - school improvement research |
| | 1 | McRel - effective school research |
| Education Field | 1 | Educational peers - program compatibility |
| | 1 | Personnel - guidelines |
| | 1 | Teachers - teacher satisfaction/ student productivity |
| | 1 | School lawyer - law readings |
| | 1 | School Advisory Committees - school improvement information |
| Community | 6 | Community - Survey observations/demographics |
| | 2 | Parents - survey - satisfaction |
| | 1 | Patrons - general knowledge of schools |
| | 1 | Local groups - image of school & expectations |
| | 1 | Committee participants - opinion on quality & quantity |
| Specialists | 1 | Consultants - quality control |
| | 1 | Technicians - problem solving ideas |
| | 1 | Curriculum specialist - research/ opinion |
| Other | 2 | Census - projected population growth/demographics |
| | 1 | Dialog - curriculum and research |

*Total numbers may not correspond to numbers listed above because some responses contained several types of information.

*QUESTION #5: IS THERE ANY INFORMATION THAT WOULD BE USEFUL IN EVALUATING YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT THAT IS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE? IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY.*

| Information Unavailable | Number Responding | Percent Responding |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 45 | 22.5 |
| No | 125 | 62.5 |
| No Response | 30 | 15.0 |

| # of Responses | Unavailable Information |
|---|---|
| 9 | Student Achievement Scores |
| 5 | Class Sizes by Department and Program: |
| 1 | Class size by type of program |
| 1 | Class schedules, sizes, length of day, school year |
| 1 | Work/study loads of teachers/students |
| 1 | Class size by departments - secondary schools |
| 1 | Caseloads for special education by school |
| 5 | Follow-up Information on Attainment of Graduates: |
| 2 | College grades of graduates |
| 1 | Comprehensive follow-up information on graduates |
| 1 | Five-year profile tracking post-graduates |
| 1 | Number attending college |
| 4 | Prior Accreditation and Evaluation Studies: |
| 2 | School visit by approval and accreditation |
| 1 | NDE & North Central evaluation |
| 1 | Last three NDE and North Central studies |
| 4 | Similar School Accomplishments: |
| 3 | What similar schools are doing |
| 1 | Comparison to others in area or statewide |
| 3 | Identification of Objective Criteria Defining Quality Educ. |
| 3 | Curriculum: |
| 2 | Curriculum offerings statewide - by size of school |
| 1 | Curriculum guides |
| [illegible] | Validated Instruments |
| [illegible] | College Entrance Exam Scores |
| [illegible] | Comprehensive method to measure and compare student perf. |
| [illegible] | Expenditures per pupil |
| [illegible] | Compare like schools on a financial basis |
| [illegible] | More services input from industry |
| 1 | Teacher pupil ratios |
| 1 | Assignment of teachers in endorsed areas |
| 1 | Timely information for statistical analysis |
| 1 | Projection of future of particular district |
| 1 | Policies and practices of similar schools |
| 1 | Good quality data from NDE |
| 1 | Items to help save time with the process |
| 1 | Economic/enrollment projections from University |
| 1 | Measure achievement of locally developed objectives |
| 1 | Effectiveness indicators |

*QUESTION #6: PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING EDUCATIONAL INDICATORS IN TERMS OF THEIR VALUE IN EVALUATING YOUR SCHOOL SYSTEM, USING A 1 THROUGH 5 SCALE.*

*1 – EXTREMELY VALUABLE*
*2 – VERY VALUABLE*
*3 – SOMEWHAT VALUABLE*
*4 – LITTLE VALUE*
*5 – NO VALUE*

| **Indicator** | **Number of Responses** | | | | | | **Average** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NR | |
| High school graduation rates | 50 | 70 | 47 | 23 | 6 | 4 | 2.31 |
| Attitudes of students & parents | 100 | 67 | 12 | 7 | 12 | 2 | 1.81 |
| Teacher qualifications | 60 | 90 | 34 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 2.05 |
| Student achievement scores | 68 | 94 | 27 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 2.08 |
| Community attitude & support | 103 | 62 | 14 | 10 | 10 | 1 | 1.80 |
| Assignment of teachers in endorsed areas | 50 | 92 | 46 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 2.10 |
| Enrollment in advanced courses | 23 | 90 | 68 | 12 | 5 | 2 | 2.42 |
| Teacher/pupil ratios | 29 | 75 | 72 | 19 | 4 | 1 | 2.47 |
| Instructional time | 55 | 93 | 33 | 15 | 3 | 1 | 2.09 |
| Local requirements for graduation | 42 | 95 | 38 | 16 | 4 | 5 | 2.21 |
| Post graduation attainment of graduates | 53 | 88 | 35 | 13 | 5 | 6 | 2.12 |
| Drop out rate | 49 | 64 | 46 | 28 | 8 | 5 | 2.39 |
| College entrance exam scores | 29 | 102 | 43 | 17 | 4 | 5 | 2.31 |
| Attendance rate | 51 | 88 | 35 | 14 | 8 | 4 | 2.18 |
| Expenditures per pupil | 28 | 57 | 74 | 31 | 5 | 5 | 2.63 |

*QUESTION #7: WHICH INDICATORS WOULD YU LIKE TO HAVE AVAILABLE TO COMPARE YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT WITH DISTRICTS SIMILAR IN SIZE, EOGRAPHY, AND COMMUNITY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS?*

No response to question on 66 surveys or 33%.

| **Indicator** | **Number of Responses** |
|---|---|
| Student achievement scores | 66 |
| Expenditures per pupil | 48 |
| Post graduation attainment of graduates | 45 |
| College entrance exam scores | 44 |
| Instructional time | 42 |
| Drop out rate | 41 |
| Local requirements for graduatio | 39 |
| Teacher/pupil ratios | 38 |
| Community attitude and support | 37 |
| High school graduation rates | 36 |
| Assignment of teachers in endorsed areas | 36 |
| Attendance rate | 36 |
| Attitudes of students and parents | 33 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher qualifications | 30 |
| Enrollment in advanced courses | 28 |
| Curriculum/course offerings | 10 |
| Size of class/school | 7 |
| Community & socio-economic status | 5 |
| Income (community statistics/personal/average per capita for all school districts) | 4 |
| General fund budget/funds available in addition to local taxes | 2 |
| Ability to support excellence | 2 |
| Comparative (financial) data statewide & nationally | 2 |
| Size of staff | 2 |
| Academic indicators related to achievement of students | 2 |
| Enrollment | 2 |
| Mill Levies | 2 |
| District valuation | 2 |
| Valuation per student | 1 |
| Instructional costs (excluding transportation) | 1 |
| Transportation | 1 |
| Programs available to students | 1 |
| Program characteristics | 1 |
| Standard set of indicators for all schools | 1 |
| Economic indicators | 1 |
| Population trends | 1 |
| Qualification data | 1 |
| Educational opportunities | 1 |
| Facility structure | 1 |
| Workload of staff | 1 |
| Salary schedules | 1 |
| Equity of opportunities of educational experience | 1 |
| Longitudinal indicators - civic participation, adjudication, incarceration rates | 1 |
| Likes and dislikes of board and community members concerning education promotes | 1 |
| Philosophy | 1 |
| Geography | 1 |
| Criterion referenced tests | 1 |
| Sales tax collection statistics | 1 |

**DATA ON RESPONDENT:**

| Years in Field of Education | Number Responding | Percent Responding |
|---|---|---|
| Under 10 | 3 | 1.5 |
| 10 - 19 | 59 | 29.5 |
| 20 - 29 | 81 | 40.5 |
| 30 and over | 49 | 24.5 |
| No Response | 8 | 4.0 |

| Job Position of Respondent | Number Responding | Percent Responding |
|---|---|---|
| Superintendent/Principal | 196 | 98.0 |
| Teacher | 1 | 0.5 |
| County Superintendent | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 2 | 1.0 |
| No Response | 1 | 0.5 |

# Attachment 4

## Educational Indicators and The Location of Information In Nebraska

### Nebraska State Department of Education
### Educational Indicators

| Indicator | Type of Indicator | Availability of Information | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Local Level | State Level |
| *School Membership* | *Context* | *Available* | *School District Membership Report* |
| *Summer School Membership* | *Context* | *Available* | *Annual Statistical Summary & State Aid Supplement* |
| *Length of School Year in Instructional Hours* | *Context* | *Available* | *Annual Statistical Summary* |
| *Curriculum Content* | *Context* | *Available* | *Fall Curriculum Report* |
| *Local Requirements for Graduation* | *Context* | *Available* | *Unavailable* |
| *Teacher Instructional Time* | *Context* | *Available* | *Fall Curriculum Report (for secondary schools only)* |
| *Teacher Job Satisfaction* | *Context* | *Not required, but many schools complete a High School Satisfaction survey, as a part of their School Evaluation Self-Study Report* | *Unavailable* |
| *Attitudes of Students/Parents* | *Context* | *Not required, but many schools complete a High School Satisfaction survey, as part of their School Evaluation Self-Study Report* | *Unavailable* |
| *Community Attitude and Support* | *Context* | *Not required, but many schools complete a High School Satisfaction Survey, as part of their School Evaluation Self-Study Report* | *Unavailable* |

| Indicator | Type of Indicator | Availability of Information<br>Local Level | <br>State Level |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Valuation/Pupil* | *Resources* | *Available* | **Valuation: State Aid Supplement (resident enrollment) Annual Financial Report (ADM)* |
| *Local/State/Federal Funding Share* | *Resources* | *Available* | *Annual Financial Report* |
| *Expenditures/Pupil* | *Resources* | *Available* | **Expenditures: Annual Financial Report*<br>*Pupils: School District Census Report*<br>*School District Membership Report*<br>*Annual Statistical Summary* |
| *Expend. as % of Income per Capita* | *Resources* | *Unavailable* | *Inaccurately available, but information not available until every income tax return is identified by the district* |
| *Average Annual Salary of Teachers* | *Resources* | *Available* | *Fall Personnel Report & Supplements* |
| *Professional Staff/ Pupil Ratio* | *Resources* | *Available* | **Fall Personnel Report & School District Membership Report* |
| *Teacher/Pupil Ratio* | *Resources* | *Available* | **Fall Personnel Report & School District Membership Report* |
| *Class Size* | *Resources* | *Available* | *Fall Curriculum Report (for secondary schools only)* |
| *Teacher Qualifications* | *Resources* | *Available* | *Annual Statistical Summary & Teacher Certification System* |
| *Assignment of Teachers in Endorsed Areas* | *Resources* | *Available, but would have to be compiled* | **Fall Personnel Report*<br>*Fall Curriculum Report*<br>*Teacher Certification System* |

*Information must be compiled from more than one report to arrive at indicator.

| Indicator | Type of Indicator | Availability of Information<br>Local Level | <br>State Level |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Scores on Student Achievement Tests* | *Outcomes* | *Available on most schools* | *Unavailable* |
| *Scores on Minimum Competency Tests* | *Outcomes* | *Available* | *Unavailable* |
| *Enrollment in Advanced Courses* | *Outcomes* | *Available* | *Fall Curriculum Report* |
| *High School Graduation Rates* | *Outcomes* | *Available* | *Annual Statistical Summary* |
| *Dropout Rates* | *Outcomes* | *Available* | *Annual Statistical Summary (separate form)* |
| *Post Graduation Attainment of Students* | *Outcomes* | *Available* | *Unavailable* |
| *College Entrance Exam Scores* | *Outcomes* | *Available* | *Unavailable* |
| *College Grades* | *Outcomes* | *Unavailable on most schools* | *Unavailable* |
| *Student Awards & Scholarships* | *Outcomes* | *Available on most schools* | *Unavailable* |
| *Awards for Outstanding School Programs and Teaching* | *Outcomes* | *Available* | *Unavailable* |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Indicator** | **Statistic about the educational system revealing something about its performance or health.** |
| **Context Indicator** | **Statistic showing the environment or situation in which education takes place.** |
| **Resource Indicator** | **Statistic relating to the availability of capital or assets needed to provide educational services.** |
| **Outcome Indicator** | **Statistic indicating the success of schools in educating children.** |

# Attachment 5

## Nebraska School Evaluation: An Introduction to the Comprehensive School Evaluation Process, 1978

School Management Services
Nebraska Department of Education
Lincoln, Nebraska

Revised - 1978

## The Process of Self-Renewal

Abe Lincoln is quoted as once saying, "If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it." Most of us will agree that we need to know more than we do about where we are and where we are going, and we especially need to know more about our schools so that we can help our children become the utmost of what they are capable of becoming. We value good schools in our society and strive toward providing quality in the educational opportunities our children experience. As Aristotle taught, "All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth."

There are many ways to learn about the effectiveness of the educational opportunities being provided for the young. Our process which assesses the total school environment is school evaluation -- the most practical means by which the educational community can determine how well the schools are in fact doing what they say they want to do. There is really only one purpose for conducting a school evaluation and that is to improve or maintain conditions which are most conducive to student learning. The school system truly dedicated to providing children with valuable learning experiences must continuously examine those experiences to be assured that educational opportunities are consistent with parental aspirations and system intentions.

School evaluation provides an educational community with a process through which it can review commitments, or again make explicit what it wishes to accomplish (and what it does not), what evidence it will accept as signs of success, and how these intentions can better be attained when it is determined they are not yet being met. By conducting a meaningful evaluative procedure, any school or school system should be able to make progress toward more effective educational opportunities reflecting needs and desires of the community it serves.

## Legal Requirements

Rule 15 of the Nebraska State Board of Education, Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Public and Nonpublic Schools states:

> 004.06A The school system shall conduct a comprehensive school evaluation at least once in each seven years using instruments and guides approved by the State Department of Education.

As part of the accrediting process of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, schools wishing to maintain or seek membership are also required to conduct a self-evaluation during each seven-year cycle. This requirement is predicated on the belief by the profession that school evaluation does stimulate self-improvement efforts in member institutions. Schools which are NCA members must also comply with certain minimal requirements which are described in the Commission on Schools publication, "Directives and Guidelines for the Improvement of Secondary School Evaluation." Individual schools must also have the approval of the NCA State Committee when using any procedures which deviates from previously approved practice.

## Phases of the School Evaluation Process

All school evaluations in Nebraska are divided into three distinct phases.

### *Phase One--The Self-Study*

The self-study is conducted by local committees made up of school staff,students and community members generally during the period of one year. Committees evaluate school programs and report their findings in a written report.

The school through these several committees conducts the self-study following a logical and sequential procedure set forth in the model selected for the study. The intent of this activity is to discover if the system is achieving its stated purposes, if the system is doing what it says and feels that it wants to be doing, and if the experiences provided to the students in the school are appropriate to accomplish the stated purposes.

### *Phase Two--The External Committee Visit*

The external committee is not expected to replicate the self-appraisal but is to examine carefully what the local school has accomplished in its self-study and how it has determined its priorities and purposes. The members of the visiting committee, from their more objective frame of reference, also attempt to identify what they consider to be areas of commendation and areas of concern. Even though the visiting committee may offer some alternative strategies on how areas of concern might be improved, the major burden for bringing forth remedies remains with the local staff members as they attempt to rectify identified concerns. The total report of the visiting committee is submitted to the school governing body for future consideration as an additional source of information for decision-making.

### *Phase Three--Implementation*

The final phase, implementation, is the culmination of efforts by the many publics who have been involved in the process of self-appraisal and external visitation. Both of these endeavors are based upon the assumption that some type of implementation will result. Not all recommendations may be implemented, however, as some system of prioritizing may of necessity eliminate some specific suggestions. The final outcome of all school evaluation efforts is the accumulation of objective and meaningful information which will be useful in making decisions to improve the educational opportunities for students.

### State Department Liaison

From the very beginning of the self-study the school should maintain contact on an "as-needed" basis with the representative or designee of the Department of Education who has been assigned to work with the school during its school evaluation. This person will assist the steering committee in the conduct of the study and will be especially helpful in organizing for the external team visit portion of school evaluation. Usually this State Department representative will serve as chairman of the visiting team which comes to the school after the self-study is completed.

Before the school evaluation is begun, the school should contact the State Department of Education, Section of School Management Services, to find out which staff member has been assigned to work with the school.

## Approaches to Self-Study

There are a variety of models for school evaluation available to the school which is undertaking self-study. The three which are discussed in the following narrative are approved by both the Nebraska Department of Education and the North Central Association. These are:

The Evaluative Criteria
NCA Guide for School Evaluation
The Nebraska Model

They are by far the most popular models in use by Nebraska schools and each of them offers flexibility in design and operation to meet the peculiar evaluative needs of the individual school. Also, each has certain components that should be respected and maintained when using the model in order that the validity of the study and the structure of the model be preserved.

Only a brief description of the three models is included here because, for each of them, a very detailed description is available from the originating publisher at moderate cost. The school will want to obtain at least one complete copy of the manual for whichever model is eventually chosen. A limited number of free-loan copies of the three instruments are available in the office of School Management Services, Nebraska Department of Education. These may be sent on request to the evaluation steering committee for examination and appraisal to assist in making the selection of a model.

The chairperson of the steering committee will be provided with a packet of materials to help with the self-evaluation. Included in this packet will be order blanks for each of the models.

The Evaluation Criteria, published by The National Study for School Evaluation

The first professionally published and widely distributed model for school self-evaluation was the original version of The Evaluative Criteria. During several revisions it has become the most widely used model throughout the nineteen states of the North Central Association. It is a proven and highly respected model. It is not the most widely used model in Nebraska, however.

Several different editions of the Evaluative Criteria are available to the schools to meet varying needs and objectives. These are:

Evaluative Criteria For the Evaluation of Secondary Schools, Fifth Edition (Checklist Version)

Evaluative Criteria For the Evaluation of Secondary Schools, Narrative Edition

Evaluative Criteria For the Evaluation of Secondary Schools

Evaluative Criteria For the Evaluation of Junior High School/Middle Schools

The possible areas of study committee assignment in the standard secondary (checklist) edition of the Evaluative Criteria are:

School and Community
Philosophy and Objectives
Educational Program
Agriculture
Art
Business Education
Distributive Education
Driver and Traffic Safety Education
English
Foreign Language
Health Education
Home Economics
Industrial Arts
Mathematics
Music

Physical Education
Religion
Science
Social Studies
Special Education
Trade, Technical and Industrial Education
Student Activities Program
Learning Media Services
Student Services
School Facilities
School Staff and Administration
Emerging and Unique Programs

In addition, each staff member completes an "Individual Staff Member" form.

The narrative editions of The Evaluative Criteria contain open-ended questions to which committees respond as they evaluate their school.

Many schools will omit or combine some of the above assignments.

Advantages of The Evaluative Criteria are:

1. The primary strength of *The Evaluative Criteria* is its ability to deal with curricular and subject matter related issues. It helps the school collect a significant amount of pertinent curricular data and offers suggestions on the use of the data to arrive at legitimate conclusions.
2. The study of teaching disciplines permits teachers to work on a study committee dealing with a topic of familiarity and of vital interest to teachers. It is usually easy for teachers to relate to the study committee assignment.
3. The study of subjects or fields fosters articulation of subject matter between grades and levels but not within a grade or level.

Disadvantages of The Evaluative Criteria are:

1. If only the junior high or secondary criteria is used, elementary staff can feel somewhat left out of the study because the results of the study will not address the elementary teaching situation as it actually exists. The same might be said of secondary staff if only the elementary criteria is used. Schools using The Evaluative Criteria generally should obtain copies of criteria for all levels. Most of the study committees should maintain a K-12 focus during the study.

2. Many study committees are required (up to 27). In the smaller school this means all teachers have to serve on two, three or even four committees. There tends to be a dissipation of effort and ennui sets in quickly.
3. The large external team costs more money for the local school in reimbursing expenses.
4. Much of the data which The Evaluative Criteria causes the committees to collect does not help address the unique issues which should be studied in each individual school or school system.
5. The study committees tend to look at very narrow issues and therefore miss some of the major overarching concerns in the school system.
6. The size of the finished study, in sheer volume and number of pages, discourages most people from reading it in its entirety.
7. Committees using the checklist version tend to give excessive attention to determining the intent or interpretation of the items in the checklist, rather than actually exploring local issues.

The NCA Guide For School Evaluation, published by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

The NCA Guide For School Evaluation provides a wealth of scholarly, yet very usable information about how to conduct a self-evaluation in a school regardless of what model is used. Indeed, a copy of The NCA Guide can be of great help to any steering committee. It is necessary to remember that some of the statements in this instrument stem from NCA requirements and are not applicable to non-NCA schools which are state accredited. An evaluation using The NCA Guide, however, is perfectly acceptable for Nebraska state accreditation.

It might be fair to say that The NCA Guide is an intermediate model, between The Evaluative Criteria and the Nebraska Model in many respects. It provides much more "direct guidance" through leading questions for the committees than the Nebraska Model, but with much less specificity than The Evaluative Criteria. (The narrative edition of The Evaluative Criteria, however, is much less "directive" than the standard edition.)

The NCA Guide also contains an excellent array of data gathering instruments. There is no requirement that all of the instruments be used nor is there any presumption about how the information will be used by the committees, but the data base which can be generated through tried and treated instruments is excellent.

The NCA Guide provides for sixteen study committees although the school may choose to omit or combine some of these in its study. The study committees which might be developed are:

The Social Setting of the School
Purposes and Objectives
Education For Pluralism
Organizational Climate
Program Design
Elementary Learning Experiences
Junior High/Middle School Learning Programs
High School Program Areas
Student Activities Program
Staff and Administration
Guidance and Other Student Personnel Special Services
Instructional Media Services
Auxiliary Services
School Physical Facilities
In-District Support
The School Improvement Plan

The NCA Guide is the least used of the three primary models in Nebraska. This should not be interpreted as an indication that it is not appropriate for Nebraska schools, however. It is an excellent model and is widely used in other states.

Advantages of The NCA Guide are:

1. It allows the school to study its curricular offerings by major division (elementary, junior high/middle school, senior high) without siphoning off the majority of the evaluative effort in a study of subject matter discipline.

2. It provides for the most thorough examination of an entire school *district* operation as it affects each *school.* It seems to provide for a wider scope of *all* school concerns than either of the other models.
3. The excellent selection of proven data gathering instruments provides a firm base of information upon which to found conclusions.

Disadvantages of *The NCA Guide* are:

1. The model calls for a large visitation committee.
2. It is sometimes difficult to coordinate the many very different study committees and delineate areas of concern between committees.
3. The questions in the instrument are good for originating meaningful discussion but they may be too general to assist the study committees in arriving at closure of the topics. It is an open-ended instrument which causes some study committees to have difficulty in the early part of the study in deciding where they are headed and what emphasis their study will entail.
4. The "canned" questions may not be appropriate for every school system.

### *The Nebraska Model,* published by the Nebraska Department of Education

The *Nebraska Model* was developed by the Nebraska State Department of Education and has been used in school evaluations since 1976. It has grown rapidly in popularity and is now the most frequently-used model in Nebraska, particularly in smaller schools, although its flexible format makes it adaptable to larger schools as well. It has been approved for use in North Central Association evaluations (named "Broad Areas Discrepancy Model" by NCA).

The *Nebraska Model* is the most open-ended, least structured of the three models. It has no questions, checklists, or instruments which are a part of the model, although study committees frequently develop their own supplementary materials or purchase commercial instruments to accompany the study.

It has been said, with considerable accuracy, that the *Nebraska Model* requires study committees to develop the locally appropriate questions which it wishes to answer and then seek the answer, whereas the other two models have a built-in supply of questions with which the committees must deal.

The Nebraska Model requires four separate areas of study with a separate study committee for each. These areas are:

Governance and Staffing
Supportive Services
Learning Climate
Instructional Program

The school may add other subjects of study to these and thereby add other study committees.

One of the unique features of the model is that the statement of philosophy and objectives for the school system is a responsibility of the steering committee, which develops this statement from philosophical elements submitted by each study committee through their identification of the Ideals.

Advantages of the Nebraska Model are:

1. The Nebraska Model deals with over-arching concerns of the school, those which are of equal interest and importance at all levels of the school system and which usually are causative of problems for schools. Thus, the school addresses "critical" topics.
2. The elementary school is accorded equality with the secondary school. There is no narrowness of vision caused by the model's concentrating on subject matter disciplines.
3. There are very few restrictions or pre-oriented measurements with which the study committees must deal. The self-study, therefore, can truly be designed to meet unique needs in each school system.
4. The model is sufficiently flexible to permit the expansion of any of the four study areas or the addition of other areas of study.

5. The small number of study committees results in a small visiting team, and the cost to the school of the visitation team portion of self-evaluation is, therefore, considerably lower.

Disadvantages of the Nebraska Model are:

1. The absence of questions, data gathering instruments, and other structuring devices which serve to provide guidance to the study committee requires that the committee must delineate, with little help from the model, the areas within its topic with which it will deal. This requires that the steering committee be prepared to provide more assistance to the study committees than perhaps is necessary with the other models.
2. It does not provide specifically for a "curriculum study" as a part of its self-study. There is limited opportunity to study "reading" or "music" or "science" as separate committee topics.
3. The very broad survey of each study committee's topic makes it more possible that the committee may "miss" or fail to address a significant concern within that topic than in the model with a more specific assignment.

## Mixing Models

Often the steering committee finds that portions of each of the models have a certain appeal and it becomes tempting to mix the various elements of the different models. This should not be done, however, since each model approaches the task of self-evaluation differently and the approaches are not harmonious.

The study should be organized to use completely one of the models. Then, if certain questions, concerns or instruments from one of the others can be used to expand or strengthen the study, that is very acceptable. As an example, student questionnaires from The Evaluative Criteria may be one source of data for use with the Nebraska Model!

## Other Models

If none of the models discussed in this narrative seem appropriate, the school may develop its own, and then seek approval of the model from the State Department of Education and, if appropriate, from the NCA State Committee.

Another alternative is to contact your State Department representative for information about how to organize for an alternative evaluation format.

## Accreditation and Evaluation--How Do They Differ?

Accreditation of school, a procedure established by the State Board of Education and the North Central Association (and other accrediting agencies throughout the U.S.), is based upon standards which the accredited schools must comply with on an annual basis. Such standards are intended to assure students, staff, and patrons that the school is providing a set of circumstances that should create quality educational opportunities for students. Typically, such standards require certain numbers and/or types of courses, materials, staff, etc., which support and encourage student learning. Nebraska schools affirm compliance with the standards by submitting annual reports to the State Department of Education and, if appropriate, the North Central Association. In addition, each year staff members of the Approval and Accreditation Section visit accredited school systems throughout Nebraska to verify and assist in compliance with the regulations.

Comprehensive school evaluation is an entirely separate activity. It is conducted once each seven years by accredited school systems in order to assess progress in meeting local needs and goals. The evaluation consists of an intensive self-study of the district, followed by a one to two-day visitation by outside educators. Such comprehensive school has been firmly established as an extremely valuable procedure to assist schools in long-range planning for improving educational opportunities for students. Each evaluation is a uniquely local effort, geared to the philosophy, goals, needs, and values of the school and community. It allows committees to delve into areas that perhaps are never covered by rules and regulations. The recommendations generated through an evaluation are used by the decision makers (the local board of education) to develop school improvement plans that will encompass a seven-year period. The entire process is intended to help generate sound, solid, constructive data that will help boards make wise decisions, resulting in the best possible educational program for the boys and girls of that community.

Both the Nebraska and the North Central Association manuals include one regulation that requires the accredited school to conduct an evaluation at least once every seven years (see Rule 15, regulation 15-004.06A and NCA Secondary Standard XI or NCA Elementary Standard XIII). A Nebraska school that conducts such an evaluation is in compliance with the above identified regulations for both agencies.

Then, does evaluation affect accreditation? The answer is both "yes" and "no". If a school does not do any kind of comprehensive evaluation in the seven-year period, it will be in violation of one regulation in Rule 15 (state accreditation) (K-12 schools are allowed three violations), and it will be subject to a warning and eventual loss of accreditation by the North Central Association. However, the outcome of the evaluation has no bearing on the school's accreditation status. A school does not receive accreditation because it has a good report; it does not lose accreditation if it has a poor report. The visitation team that participates in the school evaluation does not check compliance with regulations, and it does not determine the school's accreditation status. The team is there to assist the school--to review the self-study, to compare the operation of the school with its stated local goals, and to prepare an external report that the Board of Education will find helpful, along with a self-study, as it undertakes the important responsibility of planning the future of the school it was elected to serve. Local study committees, therefore, should have no fears regarding the "outcome" of the study and its influence upon the visitation team. Rather, they should conduct the study in as objective a manner as possible, investigating the area of study carefully and thoughtfully, so that information gained will be accurate and useful for future planning. The visiting team will verify the report, as appropriate, and provide additional ideas and recommendations that will strengthen the total process, giving the board of education the best possible working document.

Accreditation and evaluation are separate and distinct functions working toward a common purpose--to assure quality education in Nebraska schools. Accreditation assures that the basic resources for a quality education are in place; evaluation helps a school make the best possible use of those resources. This should promote efficient and effective educational programs and be to the benefit of all Nebraska students.

# Attachment 6

## A Comparison of Approval and Accreditation Standards In Nebraska: An Outline

### Nebraska State Department of Education
### Approval and Accreditation Comparison

### ELEMENTARY ONLY

| Topic | Approval Rule 14 | Accreditation Rule 15 |
|---|---|---|
| *Administration* | | |
| *Superintendent* | *None required* | *Professional Administrative certificate endorsed for the superintendency* |
| *Principal* | *None until 10 FTE teachers then 1/2 time* | *Assigned until 10 FTE teachers, then 1/2 time until 20 FTE teachers, then full-time* |
| *Library Staff* | *None required* | *Requires a 1/2 time Library/Media Specialist with an endorsement for Library/Media* |
| *Guidance Staff* | *None required* | *None required* |
| *Assignment of staff by proper endorsement* | *90%* | *95%* |
| *Library Resources* | *No minimum* | *Minimum collection of 1,600 books and other resources* |
| *Periodical Subscriptions* | *Required -- 2* | *Required -- 5* |
| *School Evaluations* | *Not required* | *Every 7 years -- self-study, external team visit, and implementation* |
| *Curriculum Guides* | *None required* | *Required for all core subjects* |
| *Multicultural Education Policy* | *None required* | *Required policy* |

## SECONDARY ONLY

| Topic | Approval<br>Rule 14 | Accreditation<br>Rule 15 |
|---|---|---|
| *Administration* | | |
| *Superintendent* | *Administrator with administrative certificate* | *Professional administrative certificate endorsed for the superintendency* |
| *Principal* | *Assigned only until 6 FTE teachers, then 1/2 time* | *Principal with secondary principal endorsement or superintendent endorsement until 10 FTE teachers, then full-time* |
| *Library Staff* | *Requires certificated staff member for 2 clock hours per day; Library/Media endorsement not required* | *Requires a 1/2 time Library/Media Specialist with an endorsement for Library/Media* |
| *Guidance Staff* | *Certificated staff member for 2 clock hours per day; Guidance endorsement not required* | *1/2 time certificated staff member with an endorsement in Guidance* |
| *Assignment of staff by proper endorsement* | *70%* | *80%* |
| *Library Resources* | *Minimum collection of 1,200 books and other resources* | *Minimum collection of 3,000 books and other resources* |
| *Periodical Subscriptions* | *10* | *25* |
| *School Evaluation* | *Not required* | *Required every 7 years* |
| *Curriculum Guides* | *Not required* | *Required for all core subjects plus library and guidance* |
| *Multicultural Education Policy* | *None required* | *Required policy* |

## SECONDARY ONLY

| **Topic** | **Approval<br>Rule 14** | **Accreditation<br>Rule 15** |
|---|---|---|
| *Course Offerings* | *Total Instruction Units: 200* | *Total Instructional Units: 390* |
| *Language Arts* | *40* | *60* |
| *Social Science* | *30* | *45* |
| *Mathematics* | *20* | *40* |
| *Science* | *20* | *40* |
| *Foreign Language* | *0* | *20* |
| *Voc. Education* | *60* | *80* |
| *Health & P.E.* | *10* | *20* |
| *Art & Music* | *4 Art*<br>*4 Music* | *40* |
| *Computer* | *Must be provided, but no specific unit requirement* | *5* |

# Attachment 7

## Performance-Based Accreditation: A Report By NE Department of Education, February 1987

# PERFORMANCE-BASED ACCREDITATION

## A Report of A Pilot Project in Four Nebraska School Districts

June 1985 -- December 1986

Prepared by the
Approval and Accreditation Section
State Department of Education
Revised February 3, 1987

# Acknowledgments

The Nebraska Department of Education is extremely grateful for the generous contribution of time and effort given by the people of Marquette, Ord, Polk, and Wayne to this study of performance-based accreditation. Special thanks are extended to Dr. Gene Panning, Superintendent, Marquette Public Schools; Dr. William Gogan, Superintendent, Ord Public Schools; Mr. Lawrence Lindquist, Superintendent, 1985-86, and Mr. Keith McMann, Superintendent, 1986-87, Polk Public Schools; and Dr. Francis Haun, Superintendent, Wayne Public Schools, who met with Department representatives on many occasions, organized their staff into study teams, directed various facets of the study and shared that information with the State Department of Education. Board members, teachers, community members, and students also contributed greatly to the collection of information for this project.

## A Report on the Performance-Based Accreditation Pilot Project

### I. Introduction

This report has been prepared in accord with a directive included in State Statute 79-1247.02 passed by the Legislature in 1985 that the State Department of Education conduct pilot projects of "performance-based accreditation." The report provides a description of the pilot projects as conducted in four Nebraska school districts, Marquette, Ord, Polk, and Wayne, during the 1985-86 calendar years along with conclusions and recommendations resulting from those studies. This report is herewith presented to the State Board of Education and the Education Committee, Ninetieth Legislature, 1st Session.

### II. Mandate and Authorization

In 1985, the Nebraska Legislature, as a part of LB 633 (which amended the Omnibus Education Bill, LB 994, of 1984) passed the following legislation:

> "Section 79-1247.02 R.R.S.: (1)(b) The State Department of Education shall conduct pilot projects using quality and performance-based criteria in selected Nebraska schools. The Department shall report to the Legislature on the success or failure of such pilot projects by January 1, 1987."
>
> The project was assigned to the Approval and Accreditation Section of the Department of Education. Money for the performance-based accreditation project was to be drawn from developmental funds appropriated for LB994 in the 1984 Session. After the pilot study had been initiated, however, the Nebraska Legislature, in the Special Session of November, 1985, mandated that the developmental funds be withdrawn but allowed the study to be continued with Department of Education funds.

## III. Background Information

There are currently three classification levels for Nebraska public and nonpublic schools. A brief review of each of these classification levels is appropriate for a better understanding of this assignment and report.

### A. Approval

Approval by the State Board of Education is required for legal operation of a school. The requirements for legal operation are found in *Rule 14, Regulations and Procedures for Approving the Continued Legal Operation of All Schools and the Opening of New Schools.* Approval is awarded annually based upon a school's compliance with the State Board of Education's requirements.

The Rule 14 requirements are written objectively so that compliance or non-compliance is readily determinable. This provides a clear position for both the schools and the State Board in any action for approval or non-approval of a school district. To guide the community and to assist them in the performance of their responsibility, the State Board of Education has set in Rule 14 certain minimum requirements dealing with such factors as facilities, curriculum, personnel, resources, equipment, and services. Approval is awarded annually, Nebraska has 1184 approved public and nonpublic schools.

### B. Accreditation

Accreditation is voluntary and provides a recognition for those school communities which choose to provide a program of learning opportunities and services to their students which is significantly higher than is required for approval. For example, the high school course offering requirements in accreditation are about twice those in approval. These requirements are set in *Rule 15, Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Public and Nonpublic Schools.* In a sense, accreditation also is performance-based, reflecting the commitment of the community and governing body to provide the program and services established in Rule 15. Accreditation is also awarded annually. Nebraska has 350 public and nonpublic accreditation schools.

### C. AA Classification

AA Classification is also voluntary and is a way of recognizing those schools found to be exemplary. The AA Classification, however, is not an official accreditation level, and the AA Guidelines focus on the delivery of services and the effective utilization of resources. AA Schools are required to perform a self-appraisal every seven years explaining how they are meeting the conditions of quality described in the AA Guidelines. This is then verified or rejected by a seven-person audit team. The AA Classification is also performance-based and focuses on the performance of the administration, the staff, and to some extent, the students. There are 37 public and nonpublic AA school systems in Nebraska.

## IV. The 1984-85 Performance-Based Approval and Accreditation Committee

The Education Reform Bill (LB994) passed in the 1984 Legislative Session included a requirement that after July 1, 1989, all public schools in the state would meet quality and performance-based approval and accreditation standards as prescribed by the State Board of Education. Responding to this mandate, the Commissioner of Education appointed an LB994 Performance-based Approval and Accreditation Committee to develop standards of quality performance and a procedure for applying these in Approval and Accreditation. The committee was appointed in September, 1984, and submitted its report titled, "Purpose, Goals, Standards, Documentation, and Audit Process and Assessment of Quality Standards" to the State Department of Education in April, 1985. (See Attachment A) The committee recognized that their standards of quality performance were not objectively stated and that "indicators" or performance criteria would have to be established to verify the existence of the quality described. These standards could then be used to award or deny approval and accreditation. The committee also recommended an audit team to verify compliance with the quality standards.

The quality standards proposed by the committee are similar in concept to the AA Guidelines which are presently in use. Verification by an audit team is the procedure currently used in the AA process. The standards of quality performance developed by the committee are comprehensive, reflect current educational practice and vocabulary, and are well defined. Those not already found in the current AA Guidelines may be incorporated to refine the AA process. The possible adaptation was one of the topics selected for the pilot study.

## V. Purpose and Direction of the 1985-86 Pilot Projects

In many respects, the current efforts in Approval and Accreditation are performance-based in that the local community, through their board of education or governing body must perform adequately; that is, they must provide the financial support, the direction and the commitment required for a sound educational system. Since no direction or explanation was included in the statute to clarify what was intended by performance-based accreditation, it was assumed that some new dimension in accreditation processes was envisioned. The focus of the study then, was to seek out new approaches and new indicators of quality performance which could be used to expand the current accreditation procedures, particularly to include a review of student performance criteria.

## VI. Study Design

Four Nebraska schools were used as pilot schools in the performance-based accreditation project. The purpose of the study was not to evaluate schools, but rather to seek the assistance of competent practitioners in developing and appraising new dimensions in state accreditation. For this purpose, the following criteria were applied in selecting the participants:

a. Schools with strong administrative leadership.
b. Schools with a recognized and respected instructional program.
c. Schools rather typical of Nebraska accredited schools in size and structure.
d. Schools with a school board and staff agreeable to devoting extra time and effort to this study.

Two of the schools selected were AA schools in order to pilot those elements of performance-based accreditation that applied to, corresponded with, or modified the current AA Guidelines. The two districts selected were Wayne and Ord, which were already scheduled for AA review and which represented typical mid-size Nebraska school districts. The pilot study also included two smaller districts, Polk and Marquette, so that other potential elements of performance-based accreditation could be piloted in districts typical of the many smaller schools in Nebraska. Polk and Marquette were already included in several experimental cooperative endeavors and were sharing a guidance counselor. These factors facilitated the study.

Each of the four schools participated in the pilot study for a period of 18 months, which included meetings with Nebraska Department of Education staff to outline and determine directions for the pilot studies, actual implementation of a variety of performance indicators in the school, and a compilation and reporting of results of findings. An audit team visit was made to each school as a part of the study process.

## VII. Description of the Study

### A. The Wayne and Ord Pilot Projects--Study of the Adaptation of Performance-Based Accreditation to AA

The Wayne and Ord projects were intended to determine to what extent the report of the Performance-based Accreditation Committee could be incorporated into the AA procedures. A second assignment was to refine school appraisal procedures by identifying indicators or criteria which help verify the conditions of quality described in the Performance-based Accreditation Committee quality performance standards.

Both schools had the AA review well underway at the time of the study, so it was not possible to use the LB994 Performance-based Accreditation Committee's instrument for the review. However, studies were made of the adaptability of the instrument, and the indicators of quality were refined. Both Ord and Wayne submitted documents of their own design which were similar in concept to the Performance-based Accreditation Committee's Report and which included standards of quality and suggested procedures for AA review. (See Attachment 8 and C)

### B. The Marquette and Polk Pilot Projects--Other Potential Elements of Performance-Based Accreditation

The Polk and Marquette projects were intended to investigate new dimensions in performance accreditation. The studies included three components described as follows:

1. Student success factors.

It is generally known that the performance of Nebraska students on the variety of standard achievement tests administered is well above the national average. Designing and implementing a uniform achievement battery for all students in Nebraska would be very costly and would only reconfirm what is already known. However, it seemed possible that other aspects of student performance could perhaps serve as criteria for school accreditation. Of the various possibilities, two student performance on college entrance examinations. To conduct this aspect of the study, all the juniors in Polk and Marquette were given the ACT college entrance test. The data gathered was studied to determine the relevance of the test information on the quality of the school program.

The information gathered from the ACT entrance examination provided valuable diagnostic information about overall strengths and weaknesses in each school's instructional program. However, it was determined that such a test would be inappropriate for all students and that, because of the voluntary nature of ACT testing (it is done at the student's expense), average school scores would be of little value and therefore not a valid indicator for school accreditation.

One important conclusion was drawn, however--all quality schools should have a strong academic program which will adequately prepare college-bound students to be successful in college. Student performance on a college entrance examination is an excellent indicator of the school's performance in this regard. However, test information from across the State would have to be analyzed before a reasonable standard could be established.

A second component of student testing focused on the acquisition of essential skills by all students. This assessment was designed to assure that the schools were making a continued effort to equip every child with skills essential for continued success in school.

Both schools are currently using the Nebraska Assessment Battery of Essential Learning Skills which assures the school's commitment to equipping all students with the skills essential for success in school. Standardized tests were also examined to determine if they could be effectively incorporated into accreditation practices. None were found. Normative measures are inappropriate for setting minimum standards because they simply compare schools and do not set a minimum acceptable level of performance. For example, if all schools were required to be at or above 25th percentile to continue to operate, 25 percent of the schools would be non-approved each year regardless of their performance.

2. School climate factors.

A second component of study was the school climate. Probably no factor better reflects a school's health and quality than the overall climate. Climate, however, is very complex. It includes the degree of trust, caring and respect demonstrated within the school and the general satisfaction level of parents, taxpayers, staff and students. Measuring these factors is difficult. However, several new instruments have been developed to help determine a school's climate. The instrument selected for this study was one prepared by the American College Testing Company and included a needs assessment and a satisfaction level assessment of students. (It had been hoped that a climate study that also included an assessment of satisfaction levels of parents and teachers could be used. Such an assessment is in the process of development, but was not available at the time of the pilot study.) The climate instrument was administered to all students in grades 5-12. It was intended that incorporating this many grade levels in the assessment would provide a range of data on school climate.

The results of the school climate assessment provided the schools with valuable diagnostic information, but, because of the short duration of the study, were of limited value to the accreditation study. Acceptable levels of satisfaction would have to be established over time using information collected from a broad sample of schools across the state before any meaningful accreditation standards could be determined. It was generally agreed, however, that school climate could be a valuable indicator in determining the school's success if adequate measures could be developed.

3. Other factors of success.

A third component was an open-ended pursuit of other factors which might correlate highly with school success. The organization of this effort was to be a quest for indicators with a high correlation for quality factors of education. This component was to be open-ended so that new ideas could be added as they might evolve. Community committees identified some student performance categories such as number of students pursuing post-secondary education, student participation in activities, and employment records of students after graduation. However, insufficient time and information were available to document the validity of the above as indicators for accreditation.

## VIII. Findings and Conclusions

1. Efforts to identify measurable indicators of quality eventually result in establishing minimum standards. This is the procedure currently found in accreditation processes. Requirements for objectivity in standards preclude designing some sort of accreditation that at the same time motivates schools to strive for even higher levels of quality. This study appears to reconfirm the effectiveness of procedures currently in effect to approve and accredit schools.
2. The audit process recommended by the Performance-Based Accreditation Committee and currently used in AA Classification is effective for determining quality education and identifying exemplary schools. The process, however,

would not be appropriate or cost effective for approving and accrediting the 1180 public and nonpublic school systems in Nebraska.

3. Other student performance criteria related to job placement, post-secondary educational pursuits, participation in school functions, dropouts, vandalism, and so forth, are believed to be good indicators of a school's success. Time did not allow for the collection of enough data to set any standards of performance on these variables.

4. Although participants in pilot projects attempted to define and assess "performance-based accreditation," there was little concurrence on what precisely is the meaning and application of the term as it applies to Nebraska schools. Further discussion and research would be necessary to develop a uniform, applicable understanding of Performance-based Accreditation.

5. The study reconfirmed the appropriateness of some of the current practices and procedures. It identified some new dimensions in accreditation which are deserving of further study and development and it produced reports containing standards of quality and indicators of quality which will be incorporated in the new revised AA Guidelines.

# Attachment 8

## NE Department of Education's Evaluation of Current School Evaluation Processes, June 11, 1987

June 11, 1987

M E M O

TO: Senator Ron Withem

FROM: Hugh A. Harlan, Administrator, Approval and Accreditation

RE: Information Requested in Item 6 in Your Letter of May 22, 1987

Item 6: The Department's level of satisfaction with the current self-study evaluation process in terms of its effectiveness and importance in assuring quality education in Nebraska.

The term "evaluation" is used in many different ways, so it is important to define it for use in this response. The "self-study evaluation process" referenced in Item 6 above, we assume, refers to the "comprehensive school evaluation" which is required in Rule 15 (accreditation), regulation 15-004.06, which states: The school system shall conduct a comprehensive school evaluation at least once in each seven years using instruments and guides approved by the State Department of Education.

The comprehensive school evaluation is an in-depth appraisal of the school's total operation and consists of three phases. Phase one is the self-study. This phase requires a thorough study of the school by committees which involve community members, staff, and students. The self-study usually takes about one year to complete.

Phase two is the external visitation phase. During this phase, a committee of people from outside the school district spends two days visiting the school to validate the findings in the self-study report and to identify other areas of strength or concern that may not have been included in the self-study. The external team, because of its broader experience base, can often suggest alternative recommendations for identified problems or concerns in addition to reinforcing the district's own findings. The first two phases together provide information for the local school board to use in planning for an improved educational program. A Department of Education staff member or representative assists the school throughout the self-study and chairs the external visitation team.

The third phase is the implementation phase. During this phase, the school board and administration review the findings of the self-study report and the external team report and develop an implementation plan for the selected recommendations.

The comprehensive school evaluation is believed to be one of the best procedures that schools can use to gather information for planning future improvements. In addition, the process is an effective professional growth activity for the local school and community. The process assists the local school district in its efforts to provide and efficient and effective school program. The comprehensive school evaluation is not intended to be used to "grade" or to compare one school system with another, nor does it provide a basis for such comparison.

Department of Education staff continuously monitor the comprehensive school evaluation process from a statewide perspective to identify and promote improvements in the process. In general, however, the Department is well satisfied that the school evaluation process helps each district make better educational decisions and results overall in the improved effectiveness and quality of education in the school and in the state. School officials are quite supportive in that they willingly participate in the school evaluation process and also donate the time of staff members to serve on external evaluation teams for other schools. School evaluation is a cooperative venture which promotes school improvement.

## Other Types of "Evaluations"

Several observations about other types of evaluations used in Nebraska might be helpful to the Study Committee in its deliberations.

1. The approval rule (Chapter 14) establishes minimum requirements for the legal operation of schools. The minimums assure that the essentials for a sound, basic educational program are provided for all students. Some schools barely meet the minimums and others far exceed those requirements. Approval sets an acceptable base of operation but does not provide a basis for comparing one school to another.
2. The accreditation rule (Chapter 15) is very similar to that used in approval, however, the minimums established are significantly higher than the minimums required for approval. The better school systems may, if they choose, be recognized for meeting these more demanding standards. Accredited schools provide broader programs and services than those in approved schools; however, again there is no basis for comparing one accredited school to another.
3. The AA Classification is quite a different process. Rather than being based upon objective minimums, it is based upon qualitative performance which is subjectively determined by a team of peers. Quality guidelines with both process and product criteria are used to determine how effectively the resources and materials of the district are being utilized. The AA procedure requires schools to strive for higher levels of performance rather than be satisfied with meeting minimums. The 37 AA schools in Nebraska are viewed as model schools and have a very positive influence on school improvement statewide.

## A School Report Card

It may be possible to rank or "grade" schools; however, in our opinion, the factors and processes to be judged would have to be judged qualitatively using a clearly defined rating procedure. The review procedure would necessarily be very subjective, and carefully trained teams of auditors would have to be employed to conduct the reviews to assure consistency in assigning ratings or "grades" (particularly if penalties or awards are to be given). Because of the need for trained auditors and because of the large number of school systems in the state of Nebraska, such a procedure would be extremely expensive. Before committing to a new evaluation procedure, it should be determined how the newly gained information would be used. What action would be taken with the schools with low or failing "grades?"

The evaluation procedures presently employed by the State Board of Education are intended to satisfy the compelling interest of the State with limited encroachment on local decision making and local control. The Department's function is primarily to assist schools in complying with the minimum requirements and at the same time encourage them to strive for quality. Local districts in Nebraska should be commended for taking their educational responsibility seriously.

# Attachment 9

## Four Myths About Program Evaluation In Education, by Dr. Robert D. Brown

*Myth 1. Program evaluation is an added-on responsibility that requires highly specialized training and should be done only by experts.*

Reality: Evaluation is a natural human activity that takes place frequently everyday. We are constantly making judgments about programs and tinkering with them to make them better. Program evaluation may be more formal and training and expertise help, but neither the evaluation nor the resulting judgments should be left solely to the "experts."

*Myth 2. Program evaluation should be as objective and as scientific as possible with no values influencing judgments.*

Reality: Evaluation is the act of making judgments about the worth of something--this program is good, this program is not so good, this program works better than the one we had last year. These are value statements. How people define "worth" and "better" depends on their values. The data collected should be objective, but the judgments remain value-loaded.

*Myth 3. Educational programs should be judged solely on the basis of student outcomes.*

Reality: Student outcomes are critical indicators of program success but how students learn is also important. If students did better on a math test then they did last year, that is a positive sign. However, if in the instructional process they used rote memorization to learn concepts, or suffered through intensive drill that necessitated neglecting other subjects, then the outcomes may include hatred of math and poorer performance on other subjects. Judgments about the worth of an educational program need to include information about the instructional process as well as the outcome.

*Myth 4. The relative worth of educational programs can be determined by comparing student performance on standardized achievement tests.*

Reality: Standardized achievement tests are helpful tools but the results should not be the sole criteria for judging the worth of an educational program. First, all tests (teacher-made, state-produced, national tests) should be carefully scrutinized to ensure that they are assessing appropriate higher order thinking skills (e.g., problem-solving) and that they reward creative thinking. Second, students' ability to apply their learning to real-world problems needs to be assessed as well as their interest in the subject matter. Third, judgments need to be made about the relative investment the school wants to make in different subject matter (e.g., math, history, reading) and different student skills (e.g., problem-solving, creative thinking) and different characteristics (e.g., autonomy, flexibility, industriousness). Finally, judgments have to be made about the appropriate disbursement of available resources (e.g., teacher time, equipment, staff development time).

Making judgments (evaluations) about educational programs is a natural but complex process necessitating information about student learning, the instructional process, and appropriate use of resources.

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Based on comments made at 1987 Nebraska Legislative Issues Symposium, Omaha, Nebraska, December 14, 1987 by Dr. Robert D. Brown, Carl A. Happold Distinguished Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

# Attachment 10

## 1987 Legislative Issues Symposium Briefing Report 1: Do We Know What Promotes Local Quality Education

1987
NEBRASKA LEGISLATIVE ISSUES SYMPOSIUM

# BRIEFING REPORT 1

## DO WE KNOW WHAT PROMOTES QUALITY LOCAL EDUCATION?

Contact person: Katherine Kasten, Associate Professor
Education Administration and Supervision
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Omaha, NE 68182
(402) 554-3442

We often know when we are in the presence of true quality—whether a person, a piece of music, a football team, or a school—but the attributes of quality are not easy to describe, and the whole is always more than the sum of the parts. Although people may generally agree on some of the attributes of quality in something as complex as local schools and school districts, quality is ultimately judged by individual interests and needs.

Nebraska has many high-quality schools and school districts. One of the reasons is that they have not had to deal with the overwhelming problems of social and cultural diversity, economic scarcity, and political divisiveness that have confronted other states. But, regardless of these advantages, the accomplishments of Nebraska's schools have been impressive. For example:

- Graduates have ranked well in national comparisons;
- The graduation rate is high, and our student/teacher ratio is low;
- Schools have supplied well-educated, reliable workers for the state and the region; and
- Although Nebraska's teachers have been paid poorly, compared with teachers in other states and with other professionals, education and the system for delivering it have been valued highly and given high priority, particularly at the local level.

### Values and Priorities

In the mid-1980s, the values and priorities of previous eras are changing because of the following:

- Depopulation, particularly in rural areas;
- An aging population;
- A decline in the proportion of households with school-aged children;
- Changing family structures;
- An increased number of children living in poverty; and
- A state economy that lags others in generating employment.

As society changes, peoples' needs for services change, and their spending priorities change. State general aid to education in Nebraska has been reduced at a time when the pattern nationally has been to increase state support because of its links to economic growth and well-being. Local taxpayers are being asked to assume a greater share of the cost of schooling at a time when fewer of them are involved directly with the public schools. At the same time, there is an increased sense that educational systems, including elementary and secondary schools, will be critical to the ability of states and localities to garner their share of the jobs generated by an information-based economy. A changing economy will require many changes, particularly in the area of providing students with problem-solving skills.

**ADVOCATES MUST BE AWARE OF THESE SHIFTS:** As support for the public schools is threatened, it is imperative that Nebraskans consider what can be done to promote quality local education. The states that have done the most to reform education in the 1980s have tended to be those that had the most to do to upgrade the quality of schools. What can we learn from their experiences so that we may act before Nebraska, too, is faced with low-quality schools and intractable educational problems? Can we use what we know to maintain and enhance the quality of one of our most important resources, our system of strong and effective local schools?

### Factors Promoting Quality Education

Nine factors that promote quality local education are described. None is sufficient in itself, and none is a guarantee of quality. Some can be used to diminish quality as well as to support it. All are difficult to attain and sustain. Quality has always been reserved for those who are willing to make special efforts.

**STATE INITIATIVE FOR CHANGE:** We know that initiative for change at the state level can promote quality local education.

*What indicates pressure for change?*

- Statewide task forces and commissions established to consider educational issues;
- New legislation passed;
- State requirements for teacher and administrator certification established or intensified; and
- State requirements regarding curriculum, graduation, and student assessment are established or intensified.

*What's happening in the states?*

- Over 300 state commissions on education were formed in the early 1980s;
- The California Assessment Program (CAP) tests students at grades 3, 6, 8, 10, and 12;
- Since 1980, 45 states and the District of Columbia have altered their requirements for earning a standard high school diploma;
- Testing of practicing teachers was implemented in Texas at an estimated cost of over $30 million; and
- Six states have made computer literacy a requirement for graduation.

**SUPPORT FROM ADVOCATES:** We know that support from advocates at the state and local levels can promote quality local education.

*What indicates support from advocates?*

- Public addresses by the governor focusing on educational issues;
- Strong advocates of education serving on legislative education and appropriation committees;
- Attention given to education in the news media;
- State superintendent of schools identifies themes and issues;
- Business leaders pay attention to education issues; and
- Local programs have local advocates.

*What's happening in the states?*

- Governors in Arkansas, Colorado, New Jersey, and Tennessee, among others, gained national reputations for concern with education;
- In New Mexico, in 1987, the governor and the state board of education submitted a joint public school budget recommendation;
- Six North Carolina businesses designed and financed a study of conditions in the state's public schools; and
- In Texas, businessman H. Ross Perot headed Governor Mark White's special committee on school reform.

**SUPPORT FROM STATE DEPARTMENTS:** We know that support from the state department of education promotes quality local education.

*What indicates state department support?*

- Collegial relations between the state department of education and local schools;
- Resources, such as technical services, data collection, and program expertise, available from the state department; and
- Advocates for program improvement in the state department.

*What's happening in the states?*

- In Maryland, the state's school chief, David Hornbeck, led efforts to help

districts improve achievement;
- Don Roberts, chief state school officer in Arkansas, initiated the Program for Effective Teaching (PET); and
- Only a few states, including South Carolina and Tennessee, have earmarked significant money for analysis of the impact of reform.

**BALANCE BETWEEN STATE AND LOCAL CONTROL:** We know that respect for the balance between state and local control of schools promotes quality local education.

*What indicates balance of control?*
- Fit between state programs and local needs,
- Improvement plans developed at the local district and local school levels and approved at the state level,
- Compliance balanced with assistance,
- Consultative relationships between state and local policy groups, and
- State efforts targeted at developing local expertise.

*What's happening in the states?*
- School improvement projects were mandated in Colorado and Pennsylvania, among other states;
- Incentives for schools to participate in improvement programs were provided in Ohio and Connecticut;
- Maryland's School Improvement Through Instructional Process (SITIP) program is voluntary and based on matching grants;
- Discretionary money was provided to schools in California and Massachusetts, among other states;
- The state may intervene in academically bankrupt school districts in seven states;
- Virtually none of the reform reports of the 1980s discussed the role of local school boards in promoting quality education; and
- State-mandated school district reorganization has been difficult in South Dakota and Illinois.

**STABILITY IN STAFFING:** We know that stability of teacher and administrator staffing at the local level promotes quality local education.

*What indicates stability?*
- Low turnover in faculty and administration,
- Good labor relations, and
- Minimal threats of cutbacks in programs or reductions in staff.

*What's happening in the states?*
- Nationally, 41 states have career ladders or other kinds of teacher incentive programs;
- Iowa raised minimum teachers' salaries to $18,000 beginning in fall 1987; and
- New York City developed the Mathematics and Science Relicensing Program to retrain teachers in the system to teach in shortage areas.

**ADEQUATE RESOURCES:** We know that adequate resources are necessary to promote quality local education.

*What indicates adequate resources?*
- Financial support for program improvement,
- Support for staff development and materials,
- Acceptable local per pupil expenditures,
- Safe and appropriate facilities, and
- Class sizes and adult-to-pupil ratios within tolerable ranges.

*What's happening in the states?*
- Nationally, state funding for education rose from 37 percent to nearly 50 percent between 1970 and 1980;
- The average pupil to teacher ratio in 1986 was 17.9, down from 18.9 in 1982;
- Average expenditures per pupil in 1986 were $3,449, up from $2,726 in 1982;
- A one-cent sales tax enacted in South Carolina provided $213 million to fund the Education Improvement Act of 1984; and
- A blue-ribbon panel in Michigan and the governor's commission on local property tax relief in Wisconsin both called for shifts from local property tax to state sources to support schools.

**BELIEF THAT ALL STUDENTS CAN LEARN:** We know that the belief that all students can learn promotes quality local education.

*What indicates this belief?*
- Choice and opportunity provided to all students in all school districts in the state;
- The state mission and school district and school goals include a clear commitment to the education of all children; and

- State policymakers, school district board members, administrators, and teachers question the effects of proposed reforms on all children.

*What's happening in the states?*

- Twelve states have minimum competency testing for grade level promotion, and 24 states have minimum competency testing for graduation;
- The Condition of Children Project in California will compare California children to children in other states and nations on equity criteria, trends, values, and attitudes;
- The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, a residential school for academically talented 11th and 12th graders, opened in Durham in 1980; and
- Under the Colorado Voucher Program for Dropouts, students who have not succeeded in their public high school may attend school in another district.

**QUALITY PROGRAMS:** We know that the use of high-quality programs for the improvement of education improves local educational quality.

*What indicates quality programs?*

- Programs are perceived as legitimate by constituent groups,
- Programs are theory-based and research-driven, and
- Programs have been validated in classrooms.

*What's happening in the states?*

- Maryland's SITIP program offers a choice of four research-based instructional models;
- The PET program in Arkansas is based on Madeline Hunter's clinical teaching and Benjamin Bloom's concept of mastery learning; and
- Several major cities, including Chicago, Milwaukee, New York, Minneapolis, San Diego, St. Louis, and Washington, DC, established school improvement programs based on effective schools research.

**PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** We know that the involvement of parents and community members in schools can promote quality local education.

*What indicates involvement?*

- Parents are interested in their children's schooling,
- Parents and community members are well-informed about local schools,
- Parents and community members are involved in making school policy,
- Schools are open to community and parent volunteers, and
- School board positions are sought actively and filled responsibly.

*What's happening in the states?*

- The California School Improvement Program requires partnership councils composed of equal numbers of community members and staff within each school;
- Currently, 60,000 business-sponsored projects are underway in American schools;
- COMPACT in Boston and Partnership in New York City provide business support for urban schools;
- Minnesota and Colorado are among the 15 states that have taken formal action to increase the range from which families may select schools; and
- Education reform in Minnesota was shaped in part by a statewide "Dialogue on Education" in 1984, whereby 291 town meetings were arranged by local school districts with support from the State Department of Education.

This *Briefing Report* was developed by the Center for Applied Urban Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha for the Legislative Council Executive Board, to provide background information for the 1987 Nebraska Legislative Issues Symposium. The *Briefing Report* is intended to provide an overview, pose important questions, and identify alternative polices and strategies for a specific issue. The views and opinions expressed are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

# Attachment 11

## 1987 Legislative Issues Symposium Briefing Report 2: Information Needed to Promote Educational Quality

1987

NEBRASKA LEGISLATIVE ISSUES SYMPOSIUM

# BRIEFING REPORT 2

## INFORMATION NEEDED TO PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Contact person: Miles T. Bryant, Assistant Professor
Teacher's College
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68588
(402) 472-3726

### Overview

If Nebraska policymakers assume that an excellent public education system is a strong contributor to economic development, they must also assume that change in the state's educational system cannot be left to chance. In other words, the state must exercise its authority to formulate policy for local school districts.

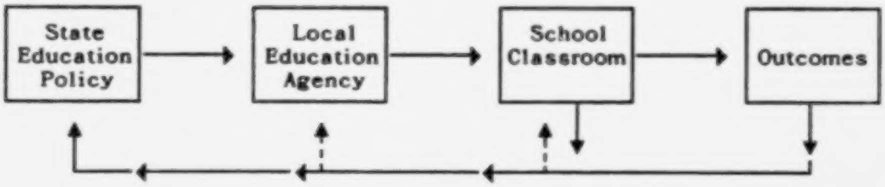
In order to know whether action taken at the state level influences what happens in the classroom and, thus, produces improved educational outcomes, state policymakers need information (figure 1).

### Information Requirements for State Policymakers

For state policymakers to gain knowledge about school classrooms and about educational outcomes the following questions need to be considered:

- Who gathers the information?
- What gets gathered?
- How is it gathered?
- To whom is it given?

Figure 1



*Who*

For information about education in Nebraska to be useful to policymakers, it must be perceived as unbiased.

*What*

For information to be useful to policymakers, it must shed some light on the impact of state policy on children in school classrooms and on the educational outputs that follow children out of the classroom.

*How*

For information to be useful to policymakers, it must be gathered systematically, and in the same way year after year.

*Whom*

For information to be useful, it must be made available to a diverse audience, including state policymakers, school officials, and parents.

## The Information Problem

Nebraska policymakers have not required the collection of information about local school conditions and school outcomes. Thus, it is difficult to know what impact state actions have in local schools. For example, Nebraska's educational reform legislation, LB 994, changed high school graduation requirements. How have students altered their course enrollments as a result of this legislation? Data on course enrollments exist for each school year, but it is difficult to capture change over time. In order to assess the impact of state policy, information must be collected at the school level.

Policymakers do not have ready access to longitudinal educational trends that are taking place in Nebraska. Again, much data exists, however, it is difficult to aggregate this information in a form that is useful to policymakers. The data are difficult to aggregate because local schools are not uniform in the way they report data, because data formatting makes asking "what if" questions difficult, because the Management Information Services is not staffed sufficiently to provide special programming, and because state policymakers have not agreed on the type of information that would be useful to them annually.

## Information Needs

State policymakers need objective, systematic, and usable information about the following aspects of Nebraska's public schools:

- Enrollment and student characteristics,
- Fiscal resources,
- Human resources,
- Organization and control,
- Curriculum and special programs,
- Student performance, and
- Preparation programs.

Nebraska policymakers also need information about the public school systems in other states and throughout the nation. Comparison data are a useful mechanism for measuring the economic advantages of one state against another. Nebraska policymakers operate at a disadvantage if they do not know how Nebraska compares with other states. For example, table 1 illustrates a case where Nebraska compares favorably. It should be recognized, however, that inter- and intrastate comparisons are crude guidelines and indicators; no two states necessarily compare the same data within their respective boundaries.

Table 1
High School Graduates as a Percentage of 17 Year Olds, California, Nebraska, and United States, 1976-84

| Year | California | Nebraska[1] | Nation |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Percent | | |
| 1984 | 67 | 86 | 74 |
| 1983 | 68 | 87 | 74 |
| 1982 | 64 | 85 | 73 |
| 1981 | 64 | 77 | 73 |
| 1980 | 62 | 76 | 72 |
| 1979 | 64 | 76 | 71 |
| 1978 | 65 | 74 | 72 |
| 1977 | 68 | 75 | 73 |
| 1976 | 70 | 73 | 74 |

[1] Nebraska's population of 17 year olds was estimated using live birth statistics.

Sources: *Conditions of Education in California, 1986-87*; *Statistics and Facts About Nebraska Schools 1984-85*; *1984 Annual Statistical Report of the Bureau of Vital Statistics*.

## What Is Gathered and What Is Not Gathered

State level data about the public school system are gathered by many agencies. Table 2 provides an abbreviated list of the information available and needed.

Table 2
Types of Public School Data Required

| What is collected? | What is needed? |
|---|---|
| **Enrollment and student characteristics:** | |
| Enrollment by grade and age | Family characteristics |
| Number of students by age | Economic characteristics |
| Private school enrollment | Work patterns of students |
| Ethnicity | Substance abuse |
| Special education | |
| Vocational education | |
| **Fiscal resources:** | |
| Expenditures by district | School comparisons |
| Expenditures by student | Condition of buildings |
| Revenues by source | Distribution of resources |
| Valuation by district | District comparisons |
| Valuation by pupil | Cost of education comparisons |
| **Human resources:** | |
| Class assignments | Age characteristics |
| Teacher pupil ratio | Statewide salary analyses |
| Teacher qualifications | Teacher supply and demand |
| Average annual salary | Patterns in credentialing |
| | Performance on tests |
| **Organization and control:** | |
| District characteristics | School board characteristics |
| School class | Private school enrollments |
| | Impact of court decisions |
| **Student performance:** | |
| Graduation rates | SAT/ACT test scores |
| Promotion rates | Standardized tests |
| | College attendance |
| | Dropout rates |

This *Briefing Report* was developed by the Center for Applied Urban Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha for the Legislative Council Executive Board, to provide background information for the 1987 Nebraska Legislative Issues Symposium. The *Briefing Report* is intended to provide an overview, pose important questions, and identify alternative polices and strategies for a specific issue. The views and opinions expressed are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

# Attachment 12

## 1987 Legislative Issues Symposium Briefing Report 3: Public School Finance in Nebraska and Selected States

**1987**

**NEBRASKA LEGISLATIVE ISSUES SYMPOSIUM**

# BRIEFING REPORT 3

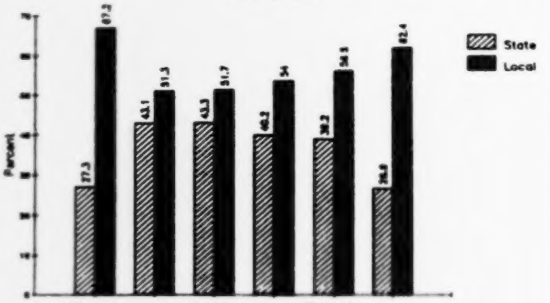
## PUBLIC SCHOOL FINANCE IN NEBRASKA AND SELECTED STATES

Contact person: C. Cale Hudson, Professor
Teacher's College
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Lincoln, NE 68588
(402) 472-3726

Summary information about levels of state support, selected features of distribution plans, and the number of local education agencies in Nebraska and five adjacent states are shown in table 1. The share of state and local government funding for public schools in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Colorado, and South Dakota during 1986-87 is provided in figure 1. The information indicates the following:

- State support for schools in Nebraska is low compared with other states in the region. South Dakota compares well with Nebraska in this category. The national average is about 50 percent; all of the states in the region are below the national average.
- State support programs are complex and represent unique adjustments to basic theoretical programs.
    - All programs require a local property tax levy against the state's share.
    - Nebraska provides the smallest proportion for equalization of any of the listed states.
    - Nebraska's school boards have the greatest fiscal independence within the region—no state budget control; no votes on local general fund levies, except in Class I units; and no levy limits.
    - Colorado provides a bonus for small attendance centers.
- Two of the states include income as a measure of local wealth and a third permits local approval of a limited income tax for program enrichment.
- The number of school districts in Nebraska far exceeds that of neighboring states.

Figure 1
State and Local Government
Shares of Funding for Public Schools,
1986-87[1]



As shown in table 1, the level of local support for public schools is high in Nebraska compared with adjacent states; local support is also high relative to all states in the United States, with Nebraska ranking 49th in state support. Moreover, local support for public schools has increased recently and state support has decreased (table 2).

- Local district taxes have increased as a source of revenue, while state aid has decreased.
- The decrease in state support means that sales and income taxes provide less support to schools, and property taxes provide more support.

Table 1
Selected States' Programs for Funding Elementary and Secondary Education

| State | State Support of Schools, General Fund Budget, 1986-87 | Selected Program Features | Wealth measures for equalization aid | Local Education Agencies |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Percent | | | Number |
| Nebraska | 25.0 | 1. Weighted pupil grants.<br>2. Equalization = residual from (1) - [local effort + other revenues].<br>3. Categorical special ed. @ 90% approved excess.<br>4. No budget limits.<br>5. Bulk of aid is flat grant, not for equalization. | Real property @ 100% assessment except for special classification for agricultural/ horticultural lands. | 891* |
| Colorado | 45.0 | 1. Guaranteed amount per pupil mill - local share = state basic aid.<br>2. Categorical special ed. @ 80 - 100% for different program features.<br>3. Categorical transportation.<br>4. Bonus payments for small attendance centers.<br>5. State budget control with provision for local override.<br>6. Bulk of aid is for equalization. | Real property with limitations on increases tied to a base year (currently 1985). | 176 |
| Kansas | 45.0 | 1. State pays district's contribution to retirement fund in addition to state aid.<br>2. State budget control with provision for local override.<br>3. Twenty percent of state income tax is rebated to school district of taxpayer; 85% of this is deducted from state aid.<br>4. Categorical special education @ 95% of excess cost.<br>5. Bulk of aid is for equalization. | District measures of wealth are tangible property and taxable income. | 304 |
| Iowa | 50.1 | 1. State regulates budget increases.<br>2. State Budget Review Committee may modify budget growth.<br>3. Enrichment surtax on income is subject to voter approval.<br>4. Special education students are weighted for inclusion in basic aid program.<br>5. Ninety-eight percent of basic support is for equalization. | Real property assessed value. | 436 |
| Missouri | 56.8 | 1. Fifty percent of state aid for equalization.<br>2. Aid calculations use previous costs, property values, adjusted gross income, and cost of education index.<br>3. State 1% sales tax earmarked for education.<br>4. Aid formula uses both guaranteed tax base equations.<br>5. Categorical special education on basis of weighted classroom units.<br>6. Local vote required to increase budgets beyond 12.5 mills. | 1. Property: residential @ 19% of market; agricultural @ 12% of soil use value; commercial @ 32%; personal @ 33.3%<br>2. Adjusted gross income. | 546 |

*updated November 1987.
Source: Unpublished state summaries.

Table 2
Sources of Revenue for Nebraska School Districts' General Funds, 1982-86

| Source of revenue | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1985-86 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Percent | | | |
| Local district taxes | 53.68 | 54.89 | 55.22 | 58.41 |
| All local sources | 57.96 | 59.22 | 59.70 | 62.41 |
| All county sources | 4.31 | 4.05 | 4.26 | 4.24 |
| State (formula) | 18.02 | 17.01 | 15.53 | 14.38 |
| Special education | 5.36 | 5.48 | 5.55 | 5.78 |
| All state sources | 30.06 | 28.75 | 26.72 | 25.82 |
| Federal aid | 5.86 | 6.04 | 6.35 | 5.93 |
| Nonrevenue sources | 1.81 | 1.94 | 2.97 | 1.60 |

Sources: C. Cale Hudson and Katherine Lewellen Kasten. "Financing Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Nebraska." *Nebraska Policy Choices: 1987*. Russell L. Smith (Ed.). Omaha, NE: Center for Applied Urban Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1987.

- Because property taxes account for most local school revenues (93.6 percent in 1985-86), Nebraska's schools are more dependent on local property taxes than school districts in most other states.

Table 3 provides information about funding elementary and secondary education. The following highlights summarize the data.

- Among the six states shown, Nebraska is fourth in expenditure per pupil, fifth in average salary for teachers, and third in per capita personal income.
- Pupil to teacher ratios appear to relate to salaries—higher ratios match higher salaries.
- Nebraska's total tax effort is modest, both nationally (rank 41) and regionally (rank 4 of 6).
- The lack of balance in the tax system in Nebraska is exceeded only by South Dakota. South Dakota has a rank spread of 32 between that for tax per $1,000 of personal income and that for property tax. Nebraska's spread was 28 in the same categories, while the other states showed much smaller differences.

Table 3
Selected Data Concerning Financing of Public Schools, Selected Years

| | State | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Item | Nebraska | Iowa | Kansas | Missouri | Colorado | South Dakota |
| Expenditure per pupil (1986-87)[1] | $ 3,437 | $ 3,740 | $ 4,137 | $ 3,345 | $ 4,129 | $ 3,190 |
| Pupil/teacher ratios[1] | 15.0 | 15.3 | 15.4 | 16.5 | 18.4 | 14.9 |
| Average salaries for teachers (1986-87)[1] | $22,063<br>(Rank 40) | $22,603<br>(Rank 39) | $23,550<br>(Rank 31) | $23,468<br>(Rank 33) | $27,388<br>(Rank 18) | $18,781<br>(Rank 51) |
| Per capita personal income (1985)[2] | $13,281<br>(Rank 23) | $12,594<br>(Rank 30) | $13,775<br>(Rank 18) | $13,244<br>(Rank 24) | $14,812<br>(Rank 9) | $11,161<br>(Rank 40) |
| State-local tax per $1,000 personal income (1984-85)[2] | 106.70<br>$~~10.67~~<br>(Rank 41) | $108.49<br>(Rank 29) | $102.91<br>(Rank 38) | $ 90.14<br>(Rank 49) | $106.35<br>(Rank 34) | $ 94.49<br>(Rank 48) |
| Property tax per $1,000 personal income (1984-85)[2] | $ 43.55<br>(Rank 13) | $ 42.41<br>(Rank 15) | $ 37.99<br>(Rank 19) | $ 19.73<br>(Rank 43) | $ 36.51<br>(Rank 22) | $ 41.24<br>(Rank 16) |

Source: [1] "Education Vital Signs 1987/88," *The American School Board Journal*, October 1987. (Ranks were calculated.)
[2] "How Does Nebraska Compare? State and Local Taxes," *Nebraska Tax Research Council, Inc.*, December 1986.

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[1] Figure 1 was taken from "Education Vital Signs 1987/88," *The American School Board Journal*, October, 1987.

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# Attachment 13

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# Attachment 14

**LB 1116**

DOCUMENT: LB1116

LB 1116

TITLE FOR AN ACT relating to education; to amend section 79-328, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, 1943; to state intent; to provide for the assessment of students as prescribed; to provide for a standardized achievement test; to create a committee; to require reports; to provide powers and duties for the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education; and to repeal the original section.

LAW Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

[3]Section 1. The Legislature recognizes that the Constitution of Nebraska places a duty on the Legislature to provide a system of public elementary and secondary education and that performance of this function has been delegated to the school districts. Further, the Legislature has provided a tax base as well as direct state assistance for financing the school system. The Legislature recognizes that it has a duty to assure that the public school system is educating citizens who will be able to participate positively in the economic, social, political, and cultural activities of the state. The Legislature takes note that in Laws 1984, LB 994, the Legislature established a role and mission for the public schools of this state to assure basic educational opportunities for all students. However, the Legislature finds that there is a need to improve the data gathering, information gathering, analysis, and evaluation capacity of the state in order to adequately describe the inputs, processes, and outcomes of the school system. Further, the Legislature finds that there is a need to assure accountability of the school system to parents, taxpayers, and state policymakers. It is the intent of the Legislature, therefore, (1) to establish a system of student assessment to measure the status and progress of students in acquiring key educational competencies, (2) to require the reporting of performance-based data to the state as well as parents and taxpayers, and (3) to develop an improved educational data system in order to provide state and local policymakers with the information needed to make sound and informed policy decisions for the operation of the public school system.

[3]Sec. 2. (1) The State Department of Education, with the guidance and assistance of the educational data system planning committee, shall by July 1, 1990, establish or designate a system of student assessment to measure the status and progress of Nebraska schools and students in teaching and learning key educational competencies. The assessment shall measure the status and progress of student acquisition of competencies in (a) reading, writing, and verbal communication, (b) mathematical computations, (c) critical thinking and analysis, and (d) other key educational competencies designated by the State Board of Education. The assessment shall be offered to all public school students and accred-

ited private school students at grade levels four, eight, and twelve. Assessment results shall be reported to the department for compilation and analysis. School districts which have, prior to the effective date of this act, developed a comparable assessment system for the measurement of key educational competencies which is approved by the department may elect to use their own assessment. The assessment shall be given in the same grades as determined by the department for the statewide assessment and shall be reported to the department for compilation and analysis.

[3](2) The department shall annually prepare a report on the progress of Nebraska schools based on such analysis as well as analysis of other indicators of the educational progress and performance of Nebraska schools as designated by the State Board of Education. The report shall be made available to the administration of each school district and, when there is more than one school facility in the district, shall report results on a school building specific basis. A report shall also be delivered annually to the State Board of Education, the Legislature, the Governor, and the governing board of each Nebraska school, which includes a statewide analysis of results of the progress of Nebraska students in acquiring key educational competencies. The report shall include a breakdown of results by school size, geographic location, socioeconomic status of residents, and any other characteristics deemed to be of importance in describing expectations for educational performance.

[3]Sec. 3. (1) In addition to the statewide assessment required pursuant to section 2 of this act, each school district in the state shall annually use a standardized achievement test which is recognized by the State Department of Education as a reliable and valid indicator of student achievement pursuant to rules and regulations adopted and promulgated by the department. The department shall not recognize more than three such achievement tests. The results of such tests shall be communicated to parents and the department on a district and building-by-building basis and shall be published by the school district in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the school district. The results of the tests shall be used by schools in curriculum evaluation and improvement.

[3](2) Each school district shall annually report to parents and the State Department of Education and publish in at least one newspaper of general circulation in the school district the following information: (a) The number of students leaving school before receiving a diploma; (b) the attendance rate of students in the school districts; (c) the college entrance test scores of students in the school district; (d) the numbers of graduates entering into programs of higher education, vocational training, and employment; (e) the status and progress of students in acquiring key educational competencies on the student assessment required pursuant to section 2 of this act; (f) the success of students in job performance based on school district surveys of

employer satisfaction; and (g) any other data determined to be of value by the department in assessing the performance of the schools.

[3]Sec. 4. There is hereby established an educational data system planning committee. The committee shall be composed of the following persons or their representatives: (1) The chairperson of the Education Committee of the Legislature; (2) the Commissioner of Eduction; and (3) representatives of the following groups appointed by the Governor: (a) Two representatives from institutions of higher education having expertise or experience in educational assessment, evaluation, and statistics; (b) other consumers and users of educational information including at least one representative of parents, business and industry, school boards, school administrators, and teachers; and (c) one representative from the accounting profession. Such appointments shall, to the extent possible, reflect the diversity of the state in geography and school size. The members shall receive no compensation but shall be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses as provided in sections 81-1174 to 81-1177 for state employees. Staff assistance and support shall be provided by the Director of Research and the State Department of Education.

[3]Sec. 5. (1) The educational data system planning committee shall provide direction, assistance, and guidance to the State Board of Education in establishing the student assessment system prescribed in section 2 of this act and indicators and reporting requirements prescribed in section 3 of this act.

[3](2) The committee shall establish a plan to improve the educational data system for elementary and secondary education. The plan shall address, but not be limited to, the following factors:

[3](a) Improved generation, reporting, and dissemination of data describing the inputs, processes, and outcomes of the state's public school system;

[3](b) Improved data on student performance;

[3](c) Methods to assure that data is available and usable by state and local education policymakers; and

[3](d) Consolidation of data requests to minimize the reporting burden on school personnel.

[3](3) The committee shall develop a plan that provides for the monitoring, updating, and appropriate revision of the educational data system.

[3](4) The committee shall by January 1, 1989, provide a report of its findings and plans to the State Board of Education, the Education Committee of the Legislature, and the Governor.

[3]Sec. 6. Sections 4 and 5 of this act shall terminate on July 1, 1990.

[3]Sec. 7. That section 79-328, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, 1943, be amended to read as follows:

[3]79-328. The State Board of Education shall have the power and it shall be its duty:

[3] (1) To appoint and fix the compensation of the Commissioner of Education;

[3] (2) To remove the commissioner from office at any time for conviction of any crime involving moral turpitude or felonious act, for inefficiency, or for willful and continuous disregard of his or her duties as commissioner or of the directives of the board;

[3] (3) Upon recommendation of the commissioner, to appoint and fix the compensation of a deputy commissioner and all professional employees of the board;

[3] (4) To organize the State Department of Education into such divisions, branches, or sections as may be necessary or desirable to perform all its proper functions and to render maximum service to the board and to the state school system;

[3] (5) To provide, through the commissioner and his or her professional staff, enlightened professional leadership, guidance, and supervision of the state school system, including educational service units. In order that the commissioner and his or her staff may carry out their duties, the board shall, through the commissioner: (a) Provide supervisory and consultative services to the schools of the state; (b) issue materials helpful in the development, maintenance, and improvement of educational facilities and programs; (c) establish rules and regulations which govern standards and procedures for the approval and legal operation of all schools in the state and for the accreditation of all schools requesting state accreditation. All public, private, denominational, or parochial schools shall either comply with the accreditation or approval requirements prescribed in this section and section 79-1247.02 or, for those schools which elect not to meet accreditation or approval requirements, the requirements prescribed in this section and subsections (2) to (4) of section 79-1701. Such standards and procedures shall be based upon the program of studies, guidance services, the number and preparation of teachers in relation to the curriculum and enrollment, instructional materials and equipment, science facilities and equipment, library facilities and materials, and health and safety factors in buildings and grounds. Rules and regulations which govern procedures and standards for private, denominational, and parochial schools which elect, pursuant to the procedures prescribed in subsections (2) to (4) of section 79-1701, not to meet state accreditation or approval requirements shall be based upon evidence that such schools offer a program of instruction leading to the acquisition of basic skills in the language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and health. Such rules and regulations may include a provision for the visitation of such schools and regular achievement testing of students attending such schools in order to insure that such schools are offering instruction in the basic skills listed in this subdivision. Any arrangements for visitation or testing shall be made through a parent representative of each such school. The results of such testing may be used as evidence that such

schools are offering instruction in such basic skills ~~,~~ but shall not be used to measure, compare, or evaluate the competency of students at such schools; (d) establish rules for the approval of high schools for the collection of nonresident high school tuition money in accordance with the rules and regulations provided for in this subdivision, except that the State Board of Education shall approve a school for the collection of nonresident high school tuition money when a hardship would result to the students and a substantial effort is being made to comply with the rules and regulations established; (e) institute a ~~statewide~~ system of ~~testing to determine the degree of achievement and accomplishment of all the students within the state's school systems, if it determines such testing would be advisable~~ student assessment as prescribed in section 2 of this act ; (f) prescribe a uniform system of records and accounting for keeping adequate educational and financial records, for gathering and reporting necessary educational data, and for evaluating educational progress; (g) cause to be published laws , rules, and regulations governing the schools and the school lands and funds with explanatory notes for the guidance of those charged with the administration of the schools of the state; (h) approve teacher education programs conducted in Nebraska institutions of higher education designed for the purpose of certificating teachers and administrators; (i) approve teacher evaluation policies and procedures developed by school districts and educational service units; and (j) approve general plans and adopt educational policies, standards, rules, and regulations for carrying out the board's responsibilities and those assigned the State Department of Education by the Legislature;

[3] (6) To adopt and promulgate rules and regulations for the guidance, supervision, accreditation, and coordination of educational service units. Such rules and regulations for accreditation shall include, but not be limited to, (a) a requirement that programs and services offered the school district by each educational service unit shall be evaluated on a regular basis, but not less than every seven years, to assure that educational service units remain responsive to school district needs and (b) guidelines for the use and management of funds, generated from the property tax levy and other sources of revenue as may be available to the educational service units, to assure that public funds are used to accomplish the purposes and goals assigned to the educational service units by section 79-2201.02. The State Board of Education shall establish procedures to encourage the coordination of activities among educational service units and to encourage effective and efficient educational service delivery on a statewide basis;

[3] (7) To submit a biennial report to the Governor and the Clerk of the Legislature covering the actions of the board, the operations of the State Department of Education, and the progress and needs of the schools and to recommend such leg-

islation as may be necessary to satisfy these needs;

[3] (8) To cause to be prepared and distributed reports designed to acquaint school district officers, teachers, and patrons of the schools with the conditions and needs of the schools;

[3] (9) To provide for consultation with professional educators and lay leaders for the purpose of securing advice deemed necessary in the formulation of policies and in the effectual discharge of its duties;

[3] (10) To cause such studies, investigations, and reports to be made and such information assembled as are necessary for the formulation of policies, for making plans, for evaluating the state school program, and for the making of essential and adequate reports;

[3] (11) To submit to the Governor and the Legislature a budget necessary to finance the state school program under its jurisdiction, including the internal operation and maintenance of the State Department of Education;

[3] (12) To interpret its own policies, standards, rules, and regulations and, upon reasonable request, hear complaints and disputes arising therefrom;

[3] (13) With the advice of the Department of Motor Vehicles, to adopt reasonable standards, not inconsistent with existing statutes, governing: (a) The general design, equipment, color, operation, and maintenance of any vehicle with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of eleven or more passengers used for the transportation of school children; and (b) the equipment, operation, and maintenance of any vehicle with a capacity of ten or less passengers used for the transportation of school children, when such vehicles are either owned or operated, or owned and operated, by any school district or privately owned or operated under contract with any school district in this state. Similar standards are to be adopted for operators of such vehicles as to physical and mental qualities, driving skills and practices, and knowledge of traffic laws and regulations which relate to school bus transportation. Such rules and regulations shall by reference be made a part of any such contract with a school district. Any officer or employee of any school district who violates any of the rules and regulations or fails to include obligations to comply with the rules and regulations in any contract executed by him or her on behalf of a school district shall be guilty of a Class V misdemeanor and shall, upon conviction thereof, be subject to removal from office or employment. Any person operating a school bus under contract with a school district who fails to comply with any of such rules and regulations shall be guilty of breach of contract and such contract shall be canceled after notice and hearing by the responsible officers of such school district;

[3] (14) To accept, on behalf of the Nebraska School for the Visually Handicapped, on behalf of the Nebraska School for the Deaf, or on behalf of any school for children with mental retardation which is exclusively owned by the State of

Nebraska and under the control and supervision of the State Department of Education, devises of real property or donations or bequests of other property, or both, if in its judgment any such devise, donation, or bequest is for the best interest of any such school or the students attending thereat, or both, and may cause any such real estate to be irrigated or otherwise improved when in its judgment it would be advisable to do so; and

[3] (15) Upon acceptance of any devise, donation, or bequest as provided in this section, to administer and carry out such devise or bequest in accordance with the terms and conditions thereof. If not prohibited by the terms and conditions of any such devise, donation, or bequest, it may sell, convey, exchange, or lease property so devised, donated, or bequeathed upon such terms and conditions as it deems best and deposit all money derived from any such sale or lease in the State Department of Education Trust Fund.

[3] Each member of the Legislature shall receive a copy of the report required by subdivision (7) of this section by making a request for it to the commissioner.

[3] None of the duties prescribed in this section shall prevent the board from exercising such other duties as in its judgment may be necessary for the proper and legal exercise of its obligations.

[3]Sec. 8. That original section 79-328, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, 1943, is repealed.